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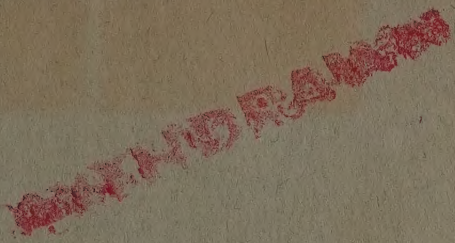

JUNE MOON

JUNE MOON

A COMEDY

IN A PROLOGUE AND THREE ACTS

BY

RING LARDNER

AND

GEORGE S. KAUFMAN

57

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
NEW YORK · LONDON
1930

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FOREWORD

In the year 1898 there were 201 fatal street accidents in the city of New York. Of these, eighty-eight were caused by horse vehicles and 113 by street-cars. In the latter total are included people who died of old age while waiting for cars that were not labelled "Car Barn Only." The following year brought the automobile to America's metropolis and the statistics attribute one fatality to its arrival, as against 103 deaths by horse vehicles and 167 by street-cars. It was not until 1913 that the automobile forged to the front as a lethal weapon, never again to be headed. After 1918 the horses and street-cars virtually gave up trying, and the figures for last year show that the thing has ceased to be a contest and become a joke—1,075 deaths by autos, 64 by street-cars and 14 by horse vehicles.

It is estimated that if the horse vehicles and street-cars had kept on fighting and maintained their early leadership over automobiles, by the year 1970 the entire population of New York City would have been wiped out and no harm done.

The *World Almanac*, from which this information was gleaned, gives us only one ray of hope.

In New York's biggest borough, Brooklyn, there were a thousand fewer births and thirteen hundred more death in 1928 than in 1927. It may also comfort some folks to know that only fifty thousand more New Yorkers speak Yiddish and Hebrew than English and Celtic.

JUNE MOON

Produced by Sam H. Harris at the Broadhurst Theatre, New York, October 9, 1929, with the following cast:

Fred Stevens	Norman Foster
Edna Baker	Linda Watkins
Paul Sears	Frank Otto
Lucille	Jean Dixon
Eileen	Lee Patrick
Maxie Schwartz	Harry Rosenthal
Goldie	Florence D. Rice
A Window Cleaner	Frank Conlan
A Man Named Brainard	Emil Hoch
Benny Fox	Philip Loeb
Mr. Hart	Leo Kennedy
Miss Rixey	Margaret Lee

Stage Manager: Milano Tilden

THE SCENES

PROLOGUE

In a parlor car.

ACT I

Paul Sears' place.
Ten days later.

ACT II

A room at Goebel's.
A few weeks later.

ACT III

Still at Goebel's.
About a month later.

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JUNE MOON

PROLOGUE

JUNE MOON

PROLOGUE

The scene is a section of a parlor car speeding toward New York, and not so very far from it when the curtain rises. We see only two chairs clearly; the ends of the car dissolve in shadows. On these less visible chairs are tossed vague overcoats and magazines; the racks above them are filled with baggage. There is a bag or two overhead; on the floor are quantities of Sunday newspapers, along with plenty of rotogravure sections, curling carelessly against the bottoms of the chairs. It is night, and the shades are down.

In the two vital chairs sit a boy and a girl. The name of the boy, as we presently find out, is Fred Stevens. *The girl is* Edna Baker. *She sits with her back to him, and is absorbed in a magazine when the curtain goes up. The boy, who is not exactly a literary type, is a bit restless. He wriggles in his seat, sighs, peers discreetly at the girl, who pays no attention. With a bit too much of a flourish, as though he thus hoped to attract her attention, he whips out a time table and studies it. Consults his watch; swings and peers out of the window, hand cupped over eyes to ex-*

clude the light. Then he swings back, relaxes—and looks toward the girl again. She swings her chair around for a second; peers down the aisle, but swings back without having permitted the boy to catch her eye. He rattles his newspaper a trifle obviously; indulges in a bit of bad whistling; hums a little. She swings around again; another look down the aisle. FRED *girds up his courage to break the ice. The girl, who has the situation well in hand, gives sudden and demure attention to an imaginary spot on her dress. She chips at it with a fingernail.*

FRED

(*diffidently extending his newspaper*)

Would you—care to look at the paper?

EDNA

(*ever so properly, in the manner of a young woman who never has been spoken to on a train before*)

Oh, thank you very much. I don't think so, thank you. (*By turning away from him again she indicates that she is not encouraging a continuation of the interview.*)

FRED

I thought maybe you might want to read.

EDNA

No, thank you. (*She gives him a small smile.*)

FRED

(*trying desperately to keep things going*)
We're due in New York at ten-three.

EDNA

Yes, I know.

FRED

You got on at Hudson, didn't you?

EDNA

Yes.

FRED

I seen you. (*A pause after this momentous remark.*) I been on ever since Schenectady.

EDNA

Really?

FRED

That's where I work. I mean, where I did work. At the G. E.

EDNA

G. E.?

FRED

General Electric. They call it the G. E. That's where their plant is, Schenectady.

EDNA

(*feeling that it's all right to help along*)
I've got a girl friend from Schenectady.

FRED

Is that so?

EDNA

She's in New York now, or at least she was the last time I heard of her. Working at Saks'. Grace Crowell.

FRED

I used to know a Mildred Crowell, but her name wasn't Grace.

EDNA

(*refusing to give in*)

This was Grace. I haven't seen her for years, and I never did know her very well.

FRED

Mildred Crowell's brother was quite a billiard player. Three cushions. Eddie, his name was.

EDNA

That's my name, too. (*Laughs.*) Of course it isn't my real name. It's just my nickname. My real name's Edna.

FRED

Oh! (*He comes back to vital matters.*) Eddie Crowell used to pretty near live on the billiard table. Then finally his health broke down and he went out West somewheres. I couldn't tell you now if he's dead or alive.

EDNA

It's funny how we lose track of people. Some of the girls I used to go with, they still live there yet, but I never look any of them up, except Ger-

tie Hutton. I guess it's terrible of me not to, because if a person's got good friends, they ought to keep them.

FRED

I certainly got good ones. They showed that last night, at the banquet. (*He has finally managed to bring that up.*)

EDNA

Were you at a banquet?

FRED

I had to be. It was me they give it for. I mean, I was the guest of honor.

EDNA

How exciting!

FRED

It was a farewell testimonial on account of me going to New York. And then this afternoon ten or eleven of them come down to the station, and Ernie Butler had a hangover and bought me this seat in the parlor car; he said it would be a disgrace for me to ride in the day coach with this new bag. (*He indicates a shining yellow suitcase at his side.*)

EDNA

It's a beautiful bag!

FRED

They give it to me at the banquet. It's got my initials. See? F. M. S. Frederick M. Stevens.

EDNA

What's the M for?

FRED

Martin.

EDNA

I like a man to have a middle name. Girls don't usually have them. I'm just plain Edna.

FRED

(*pretty daring, for him*)

I wouldn't say "plain."

EDNA

You know how to make pretty speeches.

FRED

I bet you're used to them.

EDNA

There's another one. I'm not so used to them that I don't like to hear them, especially from people whom I think they're sincere.

FRED

I don't say things unless I mean them.

EDNA

I'm glad of that.

FRED

Talking about speeches, you ought to heard the speech Carl Williams made when he give me this bag. At the banquet, I mean. I guess I

blushed, the things he said about me. A lot more than I deserve.

EDNA

I bet they were sorry to see you go. You look like the kind of a man men would like. And girls, too.

FRED

I don't go around much with girls.

EDNA

I don't go much with men, either.

FRED

Neither do I. (*A pause;* that *subject's cleaned up.*) It's comfortable in here, ain't it? Like being home. I never been in a parlor car before.

EDNA

My brother always insists on me riding in it. He says the day coach is generally dirty, for one thing—and another thing, the men that ride in the day coach are the kind that try and make up to pretty girls. That sounds like I was throwing a bouquet at myself, but I'm just repeating what Dick said. That's my brother's name, Dick. I guess a brother always thinks their sister is good-looking.

FRED

I believe in a man sticking up for their sister, or any woman. I got no use for a man that don't respect woman's hood. Where would a man be if it wasn't for their mothers and sisters and wives?

EDNA

Some men haven't got wives.

FRED

I haven't got one myself—yet. I ain't been lucky enough to meet a woman who would be a good pal as well as a sweetheart. I want my wife to be like mother used to be.

EDNA

I love to have a man love their mother.

FRED

I wished mine was still here. Like Carl Williams said in his speech last night—if she was still here, maybe she would be a little proud of me.

EDNA

I'll bet she would.

FRED

He made quite a speech, all right. He said the boys expected me to make Irving Berlin jealous. I said I didn't want to make nobody jealous, but I wanted to make my friends proud. I said my only regret in going to New York was on account of leaving so many good friends behind, and as soon as my songs begun to sell up in the hundred thousands, and my dreams came true, I would invite them all down to visit me on Broadway and show them the sights.

EDNA

(*a bit too eagerly*)

Is that what you are? A song-writer?

FRED (*nods*)

Not the music part; just the words. Lyrics, they're called.

EDNA

It must be wonderful to have a gift like that.

FRED

That's what Benny Davis called it—a gift. I guess you've heard of him—he's turned out a hundred smash hits.

EDNA

I guess I must have.

FRED

He wrote, "Oh, How I Miss You To-night!" It was a song about how he missed his mother—he called her his "Old Pal."

EDNA

That's sweet!

FRED

Well, he happened to be playing in Schenectady in vaudeville, and I happened to meet him and I happened to show him some of my lyrics. And he said a man like I with the song-writing gift was a sucker not to go to New York, because that's where they have the Mecca for a man if you got the song-writing gift. So he give me a letter to the Friars' Club, asking them to give me a two weeks' card, they call it. The Friars' Club is where they have the Mecca for song-writers. And

he give me a letter of introduction to Paul Sears, the composer. He wrote "Paprika." You remember "Paprika"? (*He sings a strain of it.*) "Paprika, Paprika, the spice of my life——"

EDNA
(*with quick concurrence*)

I think so.

FRED

When you write a song like "Paprika" you don't ever have to worry again. He's one of the most successful composers there is, Paul Sears. I bet you I and he will turn out some hits together.

EDNA

Are you going to be partners with him?

FRED

If he wants me to, and I guess he will when I show him Benny Davis's letter. That's the hard part, getting acquainted. I'd have broke away a long while ago only for my sister. I couldn't leave her alone.

EDNA

Is she in Schenectady?

FRED (*nods*)

She got married a week ago Saturday. A fella I been working with in the shipping department—Bob Gifford.

EDNA

She'll miss you just the same. I know how

sisters feel, especially when their brother is like you or Dick.

FRED

Well, anyway, she got married, and I give them a pair of book-ends.

EDNA

She'll love them!

FRED

She always done everything for me—I mean, cooked my meals and sewed things for me. Look! (*Dives for his bag and starts opening it.*) She made me a half a dozen shirts before I left. Different colors. Here's one of the blue ones. I bet if you was to buy a shirt like that, you couldn't buy a shirt like that under a dollar seventy-five.

EDNA

I'll bet it would cost more than that.

FRED

Marion can sew, all right. My mother used to say she was a born seamstress.

EDNA

I love to sew. (*Looks at the shirt.*) Has it got your monogram, your initials?

FRED

No. She was going to put a "F" on the sleeve, but she was too busy.

EDNA

It's too bad you're not my brother and I'd embroider your whole initials.

FRED

You don't have to be a man's sister to embroider their shirt.

EDNA

I don't want you to misjudge me, Mr. Stevens. I'm not the kind of a girl that talks to strangers. My friends would die if they knew I was talking to a man whom I had not been properly introduced.

FRED

You don't need to be scared of me, girlie. I treat all women like they was my sister. Till I find out different.

EDNA

A girl alone in New York can't be too careful, especially a girl in my position. You take at Dr. Quinn's, where I work—he's one of the best dentists there is, and he has lots of men patients that would be only too glad to start a little flirtation. Why even Doctor himself was fresh, the first day I met him. It turned out he wasn't really, but it seemed that way. He put his arm around my shoulders and I jumped away from him like he was a leopard or something, and I told him, I said, "Doctor, I guess I don't care to work here after all." Then he laughed and said forget it, that he

was just testing me. He said he didn't want an assistant who was inclined to flirt. And from that day he's never made any advances, except once or twice.

FRED

He'd keep his distance if I was around.

EDNA

I wish you could be.

FRED

I got plenty of excuses for being there. I got a cavity as big as the Grand Canyon.

EDNA

(*laughing a little harder than is necessary*)

You must forgive me laughing. Caroline used to tell me I had the keenest sense of humor of any person she ever met.

FRED

First thing you know I'll be in to see Dr. What's-His-Name myself.

EDNA

He'll fix it for you. He's a wonderful dentist.

FRED

If I come, it'll probably be when he's out to lunch.

EDNA

Then what would you come for?

FRED

I'll let you guess.

EDNA

I'd rather you told me. I'm a bad guesser.

FRED

I might come to see you. Would you let me?

EDNA

I'd love it, if you wanted to.

FRED

I wouldn't say so if I didn't.

EDNA

You'll forget all about it.

FRED

No, I won't. Your smile will always haunt me.

EDNA

I'll bet you're a wonderful song-writer. No wonder your friends gave you that big dinner.

FRED

It certainly was quite a banquet. I bet some of my pals got a headache to-day, all right.

EDNA

I hope you haven't got one.

FRED

No. Liquor don't afflict me like most people.

EDNA

I hardly ever touch it myself, only once in a great while, at a party.

FRED

Girls ought to lay off it entirely.

EDNA

(*quickly covering her slip*)

I never touch it.

FRED

Take some of those women in Schenectady and they want to go out somewhere every night and guzzle. Married women, too.

EDNA

I don't see how they can, with a home to take care of.

FRED

Either they get all dressed up and drag their husband to a dance or a card party every night, or either they lay around the house in a wrapper.

EDNA

When I marry I'll be just as careful of my appearance as I am now. I believe a husband appreciates a wife dressing up for him.

FRED

(*ever the practical soul*)

If it ain't too expensive.

EDNA

The man I marry won't have any complaints. I make practically all my own clothes. Caroline —she's the girl I used to live with—she used to

say I always looked like I had just stepped out of a bandbox, even if we were only sitting in our room. We hardly ever went out evenings; personally I prefer to stay home and read, or else just sit and dream. But still I always bathe and change my clothes even when I'm only going to cook dinner.

FRED

I think I'll take a room with a bathroom when I get to the hotel.

EDNA

Where are you going to stay?

FRED

The Hotel Somerset. They got rooms with a bathroom right in the room, so you don't have to go out of the room. And it's close to the music publishing houses and the Friars' Club—any place I want to go, I can walk. Except to Paul Sears' place. He probably lives in some swell apartment, or maybe a country place in Great Neck or Jamaica.

EDNA

A successful man like he wouldn't live in Jamaica.

FRED

Well, some place. I don't know much about New York; I only been there once before, with Carl Williams. He's the fella that made the speech last night. It was the first time he's been

away from home in the evening since he was married. He's got a wife and baby now.

EDNA
(*so impulsively*)

Oh, I'm dying to have a baby! (*She catches herself.*) Heavens! I didn't mean to say that. I love them so.

FRED

It's nothing against a woman to like babies. Carl's wife certainly likes hers. She's made him a nice home, too. He didn't have to buy hardly anything in the way of furniture; her grandmother gave her a bedroom suit and she bought some herself with money she saved while she was working at Berger's.

EDNA

She must be a good deal like myself. I could almost start housekeeping with the things I've got. I suppose I'm silly and old-fashioned, but I always thought a girl should bring her husband something besides herself. I even wouldn't mind going on working after I was married, till my husband established himself.

FRED

The girl I marry won't never have to work. I don't believe God ever meant for a woman to endure a life of druggery.

EDNA

Oh, Mr. Stevens, if only all men felt the same way!

FRED

(*a look at his watch*)

My, it's nine twenty-six already.

EDNA

It's been a shorter trip than usual, for some reason.

FRED

(*trying to peer out the window*)

I wonder where we're at now?

EDNA (*also peering*)

Pretty near Yonkers, I guess.

FRED

If we was on the other side we could see the Hudson River.

EDNA

My, but it's dark!

FRED

There's a moon out.

EDNA

Yes, I love it.

FRED

June—moon.

EDNA

What?

FRED

I just said June moon.

EDNA

It isn't June. It's October.

FRED

I know, but June and moon go together. They rhyme. I'm always thinking of words that rhyme, even when I ain't working.

EDNA

That'd be a catchy name, June Moon. For a song, I mean.

FRED

Yes, you could get other words to go with it. Spoon, and croon, and soon. Marry soon, or something.

EDNA

And macaroon.

FRED

Yeah. I wish I had some. I'm hungry.

EDNA

I am, too, kind of. (*After a pause.*) Some day when that song is published and people are singing it everywhere, I'll say to my friends, "I knew the man that wrote that. We were riding on a train and he looked out and saw the moon, and he thought of this song, and then the train got to New York and he never saw poor little me again."

FRED

You won't be telling the truth, because I'm going to see you again.

EDNA

You say that now. But you'll forget all about me.

FRED

No, I won't. Are you going right home when we get in?

EDNA

Why—I intended to. (*She sits up, expectantly.*)

FRED

I thought I'd go and get something to eat some place, only I wouldn't know where to go if I didn't have somebody with me that knowed where to go.

EDNA

I can tell you a place where I go once in a while, the Little Venice. Though most of the time I stay home and cook my own dinner, just because I love to cook.

FRED

It'll be a little late to cook to-night. I was wondering if you wouldn't go along to this place, and maybe we could eat together.

EDNA

I'd love to.

FRED

It ain't a very expensive place, is it?

EDNA

Oh, no. The last time I went, there was two of us and we had hot roast beef sandwiches, and peas, and coffee, and it only came to a dollar-twenty.

FRED

(*with vast relief*)

All right. I guess we can each afford sixty cents.

(THAT WINDS UP THE PROLOGUE)

ACT I

ACT I

The scene is one of those Riverside Drive apartments, in a place called New York City. It is up in the neighborhood of One Hundred and Sixteenth Street, and once it was pretty good. It's a bit run down now, and since people began moving to the East Side the neighborhood has become somewhat declassee—not more so, however, than PAUL SEARS, *the tenant of this particular apartment.*

We see the living-room, if you can call it living. There is a piano, because PAUL SEARS *is a composer. The rest of the furniture is what you might imagine, or worse.*

PAUL, *a commonplace-looking man in his middle thirties, is at the piano when the curtain rises. He is in his shirt sleeves and is alternately hitting a few discouraged keys and making probably meaningless notations on the music sheet in front of him. He lacks one finger of being a two-fingered piano player. He is laboriously going over the same phrase again and again. And if you had never even heard it once, it would be too often.*

LUCILLE, *his wife, comes on from the rear rooms of the apartment. A spare but still at-*

tractive woman, on whom three years of marriage with PAUL SEARS *have left their mark. She looks around for something. Finds it. It turns out to be a copy of the "Graphic." She drops listlessly into a chair and starts to read.* PAUL *continues torturing the piano.*

LUCILLE

(*addressing herself more than* PAUL, *as she scans her paper*)

What do you know about that! Myra Vale's engaged!

PAUL

I read it. Automobile man. Probably drives a truck.

LUCILLE

If he does, at least she'll have something to go places in.

PAUL

I got Myra her first job; I introduced her to Dillingham.

LUCILLE

Yes, you did! She was in "Nanette" with Eileen and me before you ever saw her.

PAUL (*belligerently*)

Who says so?

LUCILLE

Ask the doorman down at the Globe. He used to have to carry her in.

PAUL

She never took a drink when I knew her.

LUCILLE

I can vouch for that.

PAUL

(*jumping up from the piano*)

This is the last time I'll work with Fagan! I rewrite two whole bars of the melody for him, and when I ask him to change one word of his lyric, he squawks. He's got it "as a rose in June," and I want him to make it "as roses in June." Listen—here's his way (*he plays and sings*): "As a rose in June." And here's the way I want it: "As roses in June." All the difference in the world.

LUCILLE (*wearily*)

It sounds just the same to me.

PAUL

My way gives me a triplet and makes it twice as effective! Listen! (*Starts hitting the same old notes.*)

LUCILLE

Oh, isn't that enough? (PAUL *stops.*) Must I sit around all night listening to that?

PAUL

Why don't you go out? You could go out if you want to.

LUCILLE

Who with?

PAUL

You could go out with Eileen. You and *her* could go somewhere.

LUCILLE

You know she's got a date with Hart. I suppose you want me trailing along.

PAUL

Well, I explained to you *I* can't go no place, with this fella coming up. I told you a dozen times.

LUCILLE

I don't expect you to take me anywhere, except maybe for a walk around the block. That's free.

PAUL

I don't enjoy laying around here no more than you do. I'm not a nun.

LUCILLE

That's the first I've heard about it.

PAUL

You wait till this number gets over. We'll go everywhere then.

LUCILLE (*tiredly*)

Oh, sure!

PAUL

You haven't heard it played yet. It'll be another "Paprika." Did I tell you what Dave Stamper said about it?

LUCILLE (*quickly*)

Yes!

PAUL

(*just as though she'd said "No"*)

He said it was another "Paprika." You wait till you hear it played. Dave Stamper says it's sure fire. (*Back to his "playing" again.*)

LUCILLE

The silliest thing in the world to me is a man trying to be a composer when he can't even play "Chopsticks."

PAUL

I can play as good as I need to. I can play as good as Berlin, and he's turned out twice as many hits as anybody.

LUCILLE

He knows what people want. He appeals to the women.

PAUL

It ruins a composer to play the piano too good. They depend on fancy harmony and tempo, instead of pretty melodies.

LUCILLE (*giving up*)

All right.

PAUL

(*his eye drawn to the newspaper*)

Did you read that thing from that Boston paper about "Pretty Polly"? They say Gershwin hasn't given them one tune. (*He's pretty pleased*

about it, too.) Ten years from now, nobody'll know there *was* a Gershwin. He won't live.

LUCILLE

At least he won't starve to death.

PAUL

It was me that was responsible for Gershwin getting his start. I brought him and Georgie White together.

LUCILLE

(*simply not listening*)

Why can't you see this man in the daytime instead of asking him up here?

PAUL

Because I don't want him to come in the office yet, that's why. I'm keeping him under cover till I get rid of Fagan.

LUCILLE

If there's one thing that'll round out my day, it's entertaining a lyric-writer.

PAUL

This fella ain't like the rest of them. He's got a fresh slant. Take fellas like Fagan, that's been around Broadway all their life, and all their lyrics sound just alike. If Fagan gave me a new idea, I'd drop dead. But this fella's got a fresh slant.

LUCILLE

Fagan would drop even deader if you gave him a new tune.

PAUL

I gave him "Paprika," didn't I?

LUCILLE

That's so long ago I don't see how you remember it.

PAUL

Old man Goebel remembers it, and so does Hart. They made enough money out of it.

LUCILLE

(*the eternal wife*)

Everybody makes money but you.

PAUL

Yes, they do! There's plenty fellas around the club that's just as flat as I am.

LUCILLE

(*ever so brightly*)

That makes everything all right.

PAUL

I'll tell you who's got money, if you want to know, and that's Stevens.

LUCILLE

Who?

PAUL

This lyric-writer, Stevens. He's got money.

LUCILLE

A lot of good that'll do me.

PAUL

He's a nice kid, too. (*His eye falls on his watch.*) If Eileen's got a date with Hart, why don't she keep it? It's half past eight.

LUCILLE

Don't you worry about that.

PAUL

What about him and her, anyway? If she's engaged to him, aren't they ever going to get married?

LUCILLE

You'll know as soon as there's anything to know.

PAUL

He'll wriggle off the hook some way. If you ask me he's getting tired of her already.

LUCILLE

(*with sudden interest*)

What makes you think so?

PAUL

Just the luck I'm running in. If I ever marry again, it'll be a woman without a sister.

LUCILLE

She don't cost you much, and she's company for me.

PAUL

What's the matter with her getting a job somewheres?

(*The telephone rings.*)

LUCILLE

Yeah. You ought to be able to place her, with your influence.

PAUL

(*at the telephone*)

Hello. . . . Oh, hello, Maxie!

(*There enters, from the rear rooms,* EILEEN. *She has been drawn by the ring of the telephone, and comes on eagerly, expectantly. She is a young woman in her late twenties, and has plenty of good old-fashioned sex appeal. But with it she is a bit hard, a trifle worldly. She wears a good-looking and rather revealing negligée, and is carrying what seems to be an evening dress, on which she has been sewing, or trying to sew. She stops short as she senses that the phone call is not for her; relaxes. From her mouth comes a cloud of cigarette smoke.* PAUL, *of course, has kept right on with his phone conversation.*)

Sure—going to be here all evening. . . . All right. . . . Fine! (*He hangs up; turns to* LUCILLE.) Maxie's coming over. Wait till you hear him play it—(*a gesture toward his music*)—then you'll see!

EILEEN

(*drifting over to* LUCILLE)

What time is it?

PAUL

(*going right on*)

It's going to be another "Paprika."

LUCILLE

(*reaching for the dress that* EILEEN *has brought along*)

Want me to do that?

EILEEN

I'll go crazy, waiting around here!

PAUL

(*you can't stop him*)

If I team up with this new fella you'll hear some hits.

LUCILLE

(*handing over the paper to* EILEEN)

Did you see this? Myra Vale's announced her engagement.

EILEEN

Who to, for God's sake?

LUCILLE

Nobody we know.

EILEEN (*reading*)

No. And nobody that knows her, you can bet on that.

LUCILLE

Paul was trying to tell me he got her her first job; introduced her to Dillingham.

EILEEN

Oh, sure. He introduced Rogers to Peet, didn't he?

LUCILLE

(*indicating the dress*)

This isn't going to last much longer.

EILEEN

I know it.

LUCILLE

Why don't you look around Monday? See what you can find.

EILEEN

Maybe I will. I've just been putting it off. I'm lazy, I guess.

LUCILLE

I'd never be too lazy to shop, if I had anything to shop with.

PAUL

You wait till this number gets over.

LUCILLE

(*quite pleasantly*)

By that time I'll only want a shawl.

PAUL

(*finally flaring up*)

There's nothing helps a man like being married to a woman that always encourages you and looks on the bright side. I'm going to write an article for the *American Magazine*, saying I attribute my success to my wife.

EILEEN

Why don't you try writing articles? They might be pretty near as good as your tunes.

PAUL

You don't have to worry about my tunes. Anyhow, I was talking to Lucille.

EILEEN

It's time you did something more for Lucille besides talk to her!

PAUL

If I was in your place, I'd keep pretty still in this house. That is, unless I was paying board.

EILEEN

(*it's a good battle, by this time*)

Don't you dare say I'm dependent on you, because I'm not!

PAUL

Only for your meals and a place to sleep!

EILEEN

You wouldn't even have a job if it wasn't for me! Do you think Hart is keeping you on the staff because you wrote a hit three years ago?

LUCILLE

Now!

EILEEN

Well, make him lay off me, if he knows what's good for him. If he keeps riding me, he'll be looking for a new job!

PAUL

Swell chance of them letting me out when I've got a number like "Montana." I'd run right to Harms with it.

EILEEN

Harms wouldn't let you in their elevator!

PAUL

(*as he goes proudly into the next room*)

I was in it this afternoon!

EILEEN (*a long, long sigh*)

Is Hart going to phone or isn't he? It gets me crazy, this waiting.

LUCILLE

I wouldn't mind waiting if there was something to wait for. I nearly go out of my mind, just sitting. You hear women brag about the nice, cozy evenings they spend at home with their husband. They're not married to a piano tuner with ten thumbs.

EILEEN

(*hoping against hope*)

Maybe he didn't get back from Philadelphia. He might still be over there.

LUCILLE

What time was he going to call up?

EILEEN

Six o'clock. He said he'd call me the minute he got in. Maybe the train was late.

LUCILLE

They aren't late very often, from Philadelphia.

EILEEN

It's the only evening we'll *have* for three weeks, with him going away again to-morrow. (*Restlessly pacing.*) If he was going to be late you'd think he'd try to reach me.

LUCILLE

Of course, you know him better than I do, but when a man's really crazy about a girl, he calls her up, I don't care what he's doing. It's only when he begins cooling off that he finds excuses, like being in Philadelphia.

EILEEN

But he was in Philadelphia.

LUCILLE

I know, but they've got phones there now, too.

EILEEN

If you think he's cooling off you're crazy! He's insanely jealous. When I told him I was thinking of going out with Bert Livingston he was sore as hell. He said, "All right, go ahead and go out with him." I asked him if he meant it, and he said, "Sure! Go out with the whole Lambs Club!" He's insanely jealous and tries to hide it.

LUCILLE

I'd go out with the janitor if he asked me. God, I'm sick of this place!

EILEEN

Why don't you go to a picture?

LUCILLE

They charge admission. (*A little sardonic laugh.*) Remember the way I used to figure when Paul first came along? I thought marrying a song-writer meant going to all the first nights, meeting everybody that was worthwhile, going down to Palm Beach——

EILEEN

You would, too, if Paul was any good.

LUCILLE

I wonder what it'd be like if we'd stayed in Stroudsburg. I'd probably be married to Will Broderick, and we'd have a car——

EILEEN

To drive over to Scranton in.

LUCILLE (*a sigh*)

I suppose I ought to get consolation out of one thing. I never expect a phone call or a mash note or an invitation or even a half pound box of candy. Whatever happens is velvet.

EILEEN

You're a fool if you keep it up. You ought to break away while there's still time.

LUCILLE

That's an easy thing to say. I haven't got any grounds, in the first place.

EILEEN

You wouldn't need grounds. Just get him up in court and let the judge look at him.

LUCILLE

And even if I did get free, where am I? I'm not young any more. No man under sixty would look at me.

EILEEN

Well, men over sixty are more liable to have money than boy scouts.

LUCILLE

I don't like old men.

EILEEN

Who does? Just the same, they've got their good points. They sleep eighteen hours a day. And they're like little kids—they believe everything you tell them.

LUCILLE

I never could fool anybody. That's why I've been afraid to try anything, with Paul. He knows when I'm lying to him, every time.

EILEEN

Him! He isn't even listening to you! You could have callers right in this room and he wouldn't hear them come in—not with all those God-given melodies ringing in his ears.

LUCILLE

What's the use of talking about it? There haven't been any volunteers. Women can't go wrong if they're not invited.

EILEEN

All I can say is, if you don't break away from him, you're crazy!

LUCILLE

And if I did, do you know what would happen? He'd write ten smash hits in a week. That's my luck. . . . God! It would be wonderful to have some clothes and hold up my head again!

EILEEN

I'm through arguing with you. You're hopeless.

LUCILLE

You'd better be thinking about Mr. Hart. You may be as bad off as I am.

EILEEN

Don't you worry about me! If he wasn't crazy about me, why would he be so insanely jealous? He's insanely jealous!

LUCILLE

Has he ever said anything half-way definite? About marrying, I mean?

EILEEN

Not in words, exactly.

LUCILLE

What did he say it in?

EILEEN

He must be thinking of it. He doesn't ever go out with anybody else.

LUCILLE

(*trying to recall what* EILEEN *had said*)

How long's he going to be gone this time—three weeks?

EILEEN

Yeah—about. He's got to go to Chicago, and —a lot of places.

LUCILLE

What are you going to do with yourself all that time—just sit around?

EILEEN

Maybe he'll treat us to some shows—I'll ask him to-night. Maybe he'll get us seats for some shows.

LUCILLE

Do they still have seats at shows?

EILEEN (*restless again*)

Only I wish that thing would ring!

LUCILLE

Why *don't* you go out with Bert or somebody, while he's gone? It might be a good thing for him.

EILEEN

Do you want to get me murdered? I tell you he's insanely jealous. (*The door bell rings.*) Who's that?

LUCILLE

Maxie, I guess. (*Starting for the door.*) Or maybe that lyric-writer.

EILEEN

Who?

LUCILLE

(*disappearing into the hallway, talking as she goes*)

You know, that's coming to see Paul. From Albany or some place.

EILEEN

Oh!

LUCILLE

Of course he couldn't meet him in the daytime. He has to bring him up here in the middle of the night— (*Having opened the outside door.*) Oh, it's you!

MAXIE (*outside*)

Hello, there!

(PAUL *comes back into the room.*)

PAUL

Who is it? Maxie?

MAXIE

Yah, Maxie. (*He is a man in his late forties, easy-going, kindly. Wears a dinner coat. He is*

an arranger for Goebel's, and he knows the popular song business backwards.)

PAUL

Hello!

MAXIE

Well! All staying home on a Saturday night?

LUCILLE

All nights are alike up here.

EILEEN

You didn't come right up from the office, did you?

MAXIE

(*indicates his dinner coat*)

Do I look it? I'm playing down at the Orchard this week. Pounding the piano for a lot of morons. I envy you people that can spend an evening at home.

LUCILLE (*with emphasis*)

Yes. It's a great treat.

PAUL

I want the girls to hear the "Montana" number, the way it sounds when it's really played.

(EILEEN *starts to go.*)

MAXIE

O. K.

PAUL

(*stopping* EILEEN)

Hey! He's going to play the "Montana" number.

EILEEN

That's all right. I'll close the door. (*She leaves.*)

PAUL

Go ahead, Maxie. She don't know anything.

MAXIE

Think of me slaving down at the Orchard while you people enjoy all the comforts of home. (*An impatient movement from* LUCILLE.)

PAUL

Go ahead with "Montana."

MAXIE

It certainly was a tough day for me when Edison invented the piano. Fixing up other people's tunes—there's a life work for you.

PAUL

Go on.

MAXIE

(*his fingers rambling over the keys*)

You know, I might have been a song-writer myself but I got stuck on my own stuff. I wrote tunes nobody ever heard before—they wouldn't stand for it.

PAUL

(*prompting with a gesture*)

"Montana."

MAXIE

(*about to start, but resumes talking instead*)

That was a great idea of Fagan's, writing a lyric about Montana. I've often wondered why lyric writers stayed out of the Northwest.

PAUL

Maybe Fagan was born there.

MAXIE

Naw! Shamokin, Pennsylvania. If song-writers always wrote about their home state, what a big Jewish population Tennessee must have. (*He starts playing a popular tune—the telephone rings.* PAUL *takes it up.*)

PAUL

Hello. . . . This is him. . . . Oh, hello! . . . Where are you at now? . . . Well, you better hop in a taxi—it's quite a ways yet. (EILEEN *makes another expectant appearance in the doorway—departs in disappointment as she learns that it still isn't her call.*) 448 Riverside Drive. Tell him just above 116th Street. . . . That's it. (*He hangs up; addresses* MAXIE, *who continues to drum.*) That's Stevens, the lyric writer I was telling you about. From Schenectady.

MAXIE

Thank God he can't get that in a lyric.

PAUL

He had the phone number, but he didn't know the address.

LUCILLE

How'd he get the phone number?

PAUL

Telephone book, I guess.

LUCILLE

And then he called up for the address? (*She shakes her head—it's too much for her.*) I want to meet him.

PAUL (*to* MAXIE)

You'll like this fella. He's young yet. He's got a fresh slant.

MAXIE

What does he do—write about counties instead of states?

PAUL

I've been thinking maybe he and I could do something together, if I can get rid of Fagan.

MAXIE

Fagan isn't so bad. Only he's using up his ideas too fast. "Montana Moon." He puts a state and a moon all in one song.

PAUL

Are you going to play it? (MAXIE *plunges into the preliminary chords;* PAUL *comes to life and sets himself to sing. Raises a warning finger in the direction of* LUCILLE.) Now listen!

"Golden West that seems so far away,
Golden girl for whom I'm always pining,
Don't you know I love you night and day,
But chiefly when the full bright moon is shining!"

(*He takes new breath for the chorus.* LUCILLE, *meanwhile, is listening intently, but hardly enthusiastically. In fact, you might almost think she didn't like it so much.*)

"Montana moonlight,
As bright as noon light,
Oh, may it soon light
My way to you!
I know you're lonely,
My one and only,
For I am lonely,
Yes, lonely, too."

(*At this point* LUCILLE *simply goes back to her sewing.* PAUL'S *tone grows sharper as he sings, and she resigns herself to further listening.*)

"My heart is yearning
For kisses burning,
For lips as sweet as a rose in June.

I'm always dreaming
Of your eyes gleaming,
Beneath the beaming
Montana Moon!"

(MAXIE *plunges into a second chorus as* PAUL *presses* LUCILLE *for an opinion.*) Don't it sound great? The way Maxie plays it?

LUCILLE
(*delivering the verdict*)
I don't think Berlin will kill himself.

PAUL
It's nothing like Berlin. Play it in two-four and it's a great dance tune. (MAXIE *is obliging.* PAUL *sings a strain of it and dances.*)

LUCILLE
You don't get Berlin's songs to dance to. You get them to cry to.

PAUL
All right. You can cry to this, too. "My heart is yearning for kisses burning." That's sad.

LUCILLE
Yes, but there's something behind his songs. (*Sighs.*) They're sympathetic.

PAUL
Do you want to know why? Because he gets a little sympathy now and then! He's appreciated at home! He don't sit around here night

after night with you yapping your head off at him, telling him he's all through!

MAXIE

Now, now! You're going to write plenty of hits.

PAUL (*sits*)

Well, it makes a fellow lose confidence in himself.

LUCILLE

I'm trying to help you, not hurt you.

PAUL

You go about it in a funny way.

(EILEEN *comes back; is lighting a cigarette.*)

MAXIE

She doesn't mean anything. Of course she wants to help you. But this number—I wouldn't count on it too much if I were you.

LUCILLE

What do you mean?

PAUL

Why not?

MAXIE

I just wouldn't—that's all. You can't tell which way they're going to jump these days.

PAUL

They'll snap this one up. Unless they're crazy.

LUCILLE

Keep still a minute. (*To* MAXIE) What's happened?

MAXIE (*reluctant*)

Nothing definite. Only they were talking about it—Hart and Goebel.

PAUL

When were they?

EILEEN

(*has heard just enough*)

What did you say?

MAXIE

Huh? I said Hart and Goebel were talking about Paul's new number.

EILEEN

When?

PAUL

What did they say about it?

EILEEN

You mean they were talking about it to-day?

MAXIE

Sort of.

EILEEN

In the office, you mean?

MAXIE

Yah. Sure.

EILEEN

What time?

MAXIE

I don't know. Five o'clock.

EILEEN

Goebel and—Hart both?

MAXIE

Yah. Why? (EILEEN *takes a moment to digest this bit of information; her eyes meet* LUCILLE's. *Then, with a sudden movement, she turns and leaves the room.* LUCILLE, *after a thoughtful second, follows her out.* MAXIE *looks after them, uncomprehending. Then he turns back to Paul.*) Did I say something dirty?

PAUL

That don't matter. What did they say about the song?

MAXIE

But I don't understand——

PAUL

Listen—what did they do? Turn it down?

MAXIE

(*he has to say it*)

Right now they don't want it.

PAUL (*hotly*)

When did they hear it? After I left?

MAXIE

They asked me, so there was nothing for me to do but give it to them. I had Nate sing it.

PAUL

It's the lyric kills it! The melody's sure fire! Even if it don't sell over the counter it'd get a good mechanical break.

MAXIE (*brightly*)

Maybe you could sell it outside.

PAUL

It makes a man look like a fool, working for one house and selling your stuff to another. (*He drops into a chair, discouraged.*)

MAXIE

You mustn't let it worry you. The next one'll be great, and you'll forget all about this.

PAUL

What else did they say—when they heard it? Anything about me?

MAXIE

What could they say about you?

PAUL

If I don't deliver pretty soon they'll let me out. I'll be like all those fellows that come around every day with another tune. (*The door bell sounds.*) I guess this is Stevens.

MAXIE

Who?

PAUL

Stevens—that lyric writer.

MAXIE

Maybe he's just what you need. Maybe he'll make all the difference in the world.

PAUL

His stuff's pretty good—what I've seen of it. (*Disappears into the vestibule.*)

MAXIE (*cheerily*)

There you are! Everything'll be fine! You see! (*He is playing the piano again.*)

PAUL

(*in the hallway*)

Hello, Stevens! Glad to see you!

FRED

Hello, Mr. Sears!

PAUL

Put your hat and coat on the chair. Come right in! This is Maxie—Mr. Schwartz. Shake hands with Mr. Stevens.

FRED

Glad to meet you, Mr. Schwartz.

MAXIE

(*playing with one hand and shaking hands with the other*)

Hello, Stevens.

(LUCILLE *strolls back, eyeing the new arrival.*)

PAUL

And this is my wife. Dear, this is Mr. Stevens.

LUCILLE

How are you?

FRED (*right there with an answer*)

I'm all right.

LUCILLE

Paul tells me you're a song-writer yourself.

FRED (*modestly*)

Just the words.

LUCILLE

Well, that's all Paul needs—that and the music.

FRED

I've always been one of Mr. Sears' greatest admirers. I've admired Mr. Sears ever since he wrote "Paprika."

LUCILLE

You've got a good memory.

PAUL

Maybe Stevens and I will turn out another "Paprika."

FRED

I'm anxious to get started, all right. Since I got to town, all I've done so far is spend money.

LUCILLE (*expansively*)

Well, you're quite a stranger!

PAUL

Sit down.

FRED

Thanks. I guess I'm a little late. I got off the wrong subway station and there was an old woman there selling papers, and I stopped and talked to her because I knew she must be somebody's mother.

MAXIE

(*who has never stopped playing*)

A fresh slant.

FRED

I was right too, because she told me she has six sons. I feel sorry for old women that has to earn their living.

LUCILLE

What do the boys do—rent her the stand?

FRED

No, most of them are in a hospital and two of them had their foot cut off. She told me all about it and I give her a dollar.

PAUL

You want to be careful in a place like New York. There's all kinds of people waiting to take your money away from you.

FRED

It's a great city, all right. To-day I took the ferry-boat over to Staten's Island and back. (*He explains it to* LUCILLE.) It's an island and you have to take a ferry-boat. But I suppose you been there.

LUCILLE

I go there a lot—just for the trip.

FRED

I seen the Goddest of Liberty, too—I mean the statue. It cost a million dollars and weighs 225 ton.

MAXIE (*gently*)

She ought to cut out sweets. (*He indulges in a fancy run.*)

FRED

(*a gesture in the direction of* MAXIE)

He can play the piano! . . . And I seen some of the big ocean liner steamboats. I seen the *President Harding* just coming in from London or Europe or somewheres, and the other day I seen the *Majestic* tied up to the dock. She's pretty near twicet as long as the *President Harding* and weighs 56,000 ton. The *President Harding* only weighs 14,000 ton.

LUCILLE

Imagine!

FRED (*to* LUCILLE)

Have you been through the Holland Tunnel?

LUCILLE

No, I haven't.

FRED (*to* PAUL)

Have you been through the Holland Tunnel?

PAUL

No.

FRED

(*not for a minute giving up*)

Have you been through the Holland Tunnel, Mr. Schwartz?

MAXIE

I've been waiting for somebody to go with.

FRED

I'll go with you!

MAXIE

Fine!

FRED

I want to go every place so as to get ideas for songs. I was telling Mr. Sears about one idea—I haven't got it written yet—it's a song about the traffic lights. Green for "Come ahead!" and red for "Stop!" Maybe a comical song with a girl signaling her sweetheart with different colored lights in the window; a green light when it's all right for him to call——

LUCILLE

And a red one when her husband's home.

FRED (*shocked*)

No, I was thinking about her father. I wouldn't write about those kind of women—I got no sympathy for them.

LUCILLE

I guess you're right.

FRED

I was thinking of another idea on the way up here. Maybe a song about the melting pots—all the immigrants from overseas who've come to the Land of Liberty. Take the Jews—do you know there's nearly two million Jews in New York City alone?

MAXIE

What do you mean alone?

FRED

And then there's the Hall of Fame, up to Washington Heights. They got everybody up there. Washington, Lincoln, Longfellow. They got two dozen—what do you call 'em—busts?

LUCILLE

(*sweetly, to* PAUL)

That's the place for you, dear.

FRED

No. A man's got to be dead for twenty-five years.

LUCILLE

Well, that fits in.

MAXIE

(*it's too much for him*)

I've got to be going along.

PAUL

Wait! I want Stevens to show you one of his lyrics—have you got that one with you? About the game?

MAXIE

I've got to be downtown at ten.

PAUL

This won't take a minute. (*To* FRED.) Go ahead.

FRED

I'll have to explain first, so you'll understand. The idea came to me at a football game between Syracuse and Colgate. They beat them, and they felt pretty bad, so the idea come to me for this little song. I call it "Life Is a Game."

MAXIE

A novelty!

FRED

Here's the verse. Are you ready?

PAUL

Yeah.

FRED

"I don't know why some people cry
When things appear to go wrong;
I always say 'Laugh and be gay!'
Things cannot always go wrong!
No use to pine, no use to whine,
Things will come right if you just give them time."

That's the verse.

LUCILLE

Uh-huh!

FRED

Then here's the refrain:

"Life is a game; we are but players——"

MAXIE

Hey, bring it here! Maybe we can put some music to it.

FRED

Just play some chords.

MAXIE

I'll see if I know any.

MAXIE

(*sings as well as he can to* MAXIE's *improvisation*)

"Life is a game; we are but players
Playing the best we know how.
If you are beat, don't let it wrangle;
No one can win all the time.
Sometimes the odds seem dead against you;
What has to be, has to be,
But smile just the same, for life is a game,
And God is a fine referee."

(MAXIE *picks up the last line and sings it again, tacking on a rousing musical finale to fit. It is really the finish of "All Those Endearing Young Charms," but so far as* FRED *is concerned it has been composed especially for his lyric. He is beaming with pleasure.*)

I haven't got the second verse yet.

MAXIE

You won't need one.

LUCILLE

I like a song with love interest.

FRED

Well, I got an idea and a title for another one —I mean, of course I got lots of ideas, but this one, I told it to a party and she—(*he catches himself, embarrassed*)—I mean, this party seemed to think it was pretty good.

PAUL

Let's hear it.

FRED

It's just a title. You told me you'd rather have just a title and then write the tune first.

PAUL

What's the title?

FRED

"June Moon." That's the title—"June Moon."

MAXIE

A war song.

FRED

No, no. The verse will be about a fella that's met a girl in June, when there was a moon shining, and then something happened so that she went away, or maybe he went away, and then whenever he looks up at the moon after that, he

thinks of her. In the second verse, she'll be doing the same thing for him.

LUCILLE

That's fair enough.

PAUL

I don't know—another moon song.

MAXIE

(*dashing to the piano*)

"June Moon"—I've got it!

(*He ad-libs a melody;* FRED *chimes in with some extemporized words.*)

FRED (*singing*)

June Moon, how I wish you so-and-so, how I miss my so-and-so, spoon! (*He comes out strong on the "spoon"*—that's *right, anyhow.*)

(*Meanwhile the phone has rung again, and under cover of the music* LUCILLE *has answered it.*)

LUCILLE

Hello. . . . No, this is Lucille. Just a minute. (*She puts down the receiver.*) Eileen!

PAUL

(*who has managed, despite the confusion, to make mental note of* MAXIE'S *melody*)

Well, I might be able to dig up something for that.

FRED

(*plunging expansively into explanation*)

I got the idea coming in on the train. I happened to look out of the window——

(*He stops abruptly as* EILEEN *comes back on. She has put on a dress, but, in view of the news that* MAXIE *had brought, not the evening dress. She looks smart, however, and* FRED *is impressed, to say the least. Paying no attention to any one, she heads straight for the telephone.*)

EILEEN

Hello! . . . Oh, no, not at all. (*To say that the lady is sarcastic is putting it mildly.*) What train? . . . You're sure of that, are you? . . . Nothing, only I thought you might be mistaken. Everybody makes mistakes, you know. (*It's a good chance for* MAXIE *to escape, and he leaps up. While* EILEEN *is still talking he manages to get out*—"Good-by, everybody! I'm due at the Orchard! Glad to have met you, Stevens," *etc.* PAUL *follows him out with: "Now look! Don't say anything to Fagan, because I don't want him to know until—" The voices die out.* FRED, *a bit embarrassed, is left alone with the two girls, while* EILEEN *continues her phone talk.*) Yes, I can imagine. It must have been terribly tiresome in Philadelphia all day. . . . What? . . . Oh, really? (*Her tone indicates that this is the body blow.*) I thought you were leaving to-morrow.

. . . What time to-night? . . . My, it must be important! . . . Then—I won't have a chance to say good-by before you go. . . . Oh, no, don't trouble yourself—it's quite all right. . . . Yes, I'm sure you are. . . . No, I don't mind a bit. I'm just sorry you have to spend the night on a train, that's all. . . . Oh, perfectly! . . . Have a pleasant trip. (*But she doesn't mean "pleasant trip." She hangs up; a look flashes between her and* LUCILLE.)

LUCILLE

(*coming back to the present*)

Mr. Stevens, this is my sister, Miss Fletcher. Eileen—Mr. Stevens. (*She gives a broad wave of the hand, as if to say, "And if you want him, he's yours."*)

EILEEN

(*her mind on the telephone*)

Hello.

FRED

I'm glad to meet you, Miss Fletcher.

EILEEN

Thanks.

LUCILLE

Mr. Stevens is a lyric writer. He's from Schenectady.

EILEEN

Oh, yes. Have you been in New York long?

FRED

Just a couple of weeks. I'm from Schenectady.

EILEEN (*a lot she cares*)

Schenectady, eh?

LUCILLE

(*with the air of a person who is washing that up*)

Schenectady.

FRED

I was with the General Electric Company, but I left them.

EILEEN

I suppose they've closed down?

FRED

(*who knows better than that*)

No. I had a post-card to-day from a fella that works there.

LUCILLE

Mr. Stevens has been all over New York, getting ideas for songs.

EILEEN

Do you like it?

FRED

Yes, I like it fine, but it costs money to live here. For instance, I had breakfast in the hotel this morning and it was ninety cents for salt mackerel and mashed potatoes and a cup of Instant Postum.

LUCILLE

No wonder you think New York's expensive! A few more breakfasts like that and you won't have any money left.

FRED

I still got plenty.

LUCILLE

Really? (*She flashes a look to* EILEEN.) I'll bet you haven't been to any of the real places, have you? It takes a New Yorker to find those.

FRED

I seen the Goddest of Liberty.

LUCILLE

Oh, I mean the night places!

FRED

I seen it at night.

LUCILLE

Oh, no! Restaurants!

FRED

Huh?

LUCILLE

Mr. Stevens would love those. (*To* EILEEN.) Wouldn't he?

EILEEN (*slowly coming to*)

Yah.

LUCILLE

I'll tell you what! Why don't we make up a party—the four of us—and show Mr. Stevens the town!

FRED

You mean to-night?

LUCILLE

What do you say, Eileen? How about it?

EILEEN

(*thinking hard; her eyes go involuntarily to the telephone*)

Why—sure! I don't know why not! Sure!

FRED

Well, wait! It'd be great to go, all right, only the trouble is I got another engagement!

LUCILLE

Oh, but you could put that off!

EILEEN

Of course you could!

LUCILLE (*as* PAUL *re-enters*)

Paul had another engagement, too. He broke it on your account, didn't you, dear?

PAUL

(*to whom this is news*)

What?

LUCILLE

We thought it would be fun for the four of us to go out some place, but Mr. Stevens doesn't want to.

FRED

It ain't that I don't want to, but——

LUCILLE

You know, you really ought to. Paul was just

saying that what you needed was to go places where they do the latest numbers and hear what kind of songs are getting over! That's true, isn't it, Paul?

PAUL

Ah, yes! Sure!

LUCILLE

Of course it is! Are we all set?

FRED

Well, I want to go all right. It's only I don't know on account of this other engagement.

EILEEN

But you could do something about that. You could go if you really wanted to. (*So close to him that he is groggy.*) Don't you—want to?

FRED (*hesitating*)

Well, I ain't dressed to go out. I mean, to some swell place.

EILEEN

We'll go where we don't have to dress.

LUCILLE

How about the Orchard? Wouldn't Maxie be surprised to see the four of us stroll in?

EILEEN

Lucille and I'll go right in and get our things on. (*A movement.*)

PAUL

Well, wait a minute! It's just that I didnt happen to bring much money with me——

LUCILLE

Oh, that's all right. Mr. Stevens can be the treasurer to-night and you can fix it up with him later!

EILEEN

As long as you're going to be partners!

LUCILLE

Come on! Let's hurry!
(*The* GIRLS *rush off.*)

PAUL

Is that all right with you?

FRED

(*looking after the pair*)
Say, she's quite a girl, isn't she?

PAUL

Who? Eileen?

FRED

Does she live here with you all the time?

PAUL

Yah. She does.

FRED

She's a regular New York girlie.

PAUL

Maybe it wouldn't be a bad notion for you to

knock around a few nights—I mean, before we start working. Might give you some ideas.

FRED

I'm willing.

PAUL

Great!

FRED

Say, can I use your phone a minute?

PAUL

Sure. Do you want the book?

FRED

No, I know the number. (*Takes receiver off.*) Rhinelander 4160.

PAUL

I'd better clean up a bit.

FRED

Look! They was talking about this Orchard. That ain't one of them expensive places, is it?

PAUL

No. Just about average.

FRED

Hello. . . . I want to speak to Miss Edna Baker, please. . . . Yes. (*To* PAUL.) I mean, what do you think it would be likely to come to for the four of us? More than ten dollars?

PAUL (*vaguely*)

No—not unless we go on to some other place. You've got more with you, haven't you?

FRED

What other place?

PAUL

One of the other clubs.

FRED

But I don't—hello. . . . Hello. . . . Eddie? . . . . I want to tell you something.

PAUL

I'll go and wash up. (*Departs.*)

FRED

Well, I'm up there now, but that isn't— Sure. . . . Yeah, it looks all right. . . . No, I'm still here. There was a piano player here from Goebel's. He liked my stuff and made up a tune to some of it. . . . Yeah. . . . He said it was all right. But that isn't . . . what I called up to say was I can't get around there till late. . . . No, it'll be later than that. There's no telling what time it'll be. . . . We got to study some songs. . . . Paul Sears and his wife. . . . No, no, don't think that. It's a business proposition. They're taking me to a place where we'll get some ideas. . . . Just the three of us. . . . But you know I'd rather be with you. (EILEEN *comes back, coat over arm.*) But I can't. . . . I can't. . . . *They're* taking *me.* I'll tell you all about it in the morning. . . . That's all I can say now. . . . I can't. . . . In the morning. . . . Good night. (*Hangs up.*)

EILEEN

You seem to be having your troubles.

FRED

No, that wasn't anything. Just a—friend of mine.

EILEEN

Is she nice?

FRED

It isn't anybody. Just a little girl I happened to meet.

EILEEN

I understand.

FRED

She's just a—a girl from a little town.

(LUCILLE *comes back, full of life. Pulling on gloves, etc.*)

LUCILLE

Listen—it's kind of early for the Orchard anyhow. So why don't we take in the second show at the Capitol?

(PAUL *is on again.*)

PAUL

Is everybody ready?

EILEEN

Oh, that's fine! And I know what you'd love! After the Orchard what do you say we go to the Cotton Club? (*She throws a quick explanation to* FRED.) That's Harlem!

LUCILLE

Great!

EILEEN

They've got a wonderful tap dancer up there! Better than Bill Robinson!

PAUL

But say, the Cotton Club don't get hot till three!

FRED

(*who has never heard of that hour*)

What time?

EILEEN

Oh, that's all right! We can go to the Madrid or Richman's in between!

LUCILLE

Oh, great!

PAUL

But say, Richman's burned down the other night!

FRED

Let's not go there!

LUCILLE

I'll tell you where I haven't been for a long while! The St. Regis Roof!

EILEEN

Grand!

LUCILLE

They've a wonderful view!

FRED

Where?

LUCILLE

The St. Regis Roof.

FRED

I get dizzy if I climb a ladder!

(*The voices of the others pick up in a confused jumble as*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT II

ACT II

The scene is a room at Goebel's music publishing house. A piano, a few chairs, some shelves, and you have it. Three or four weeks have gone by since Act I.

MAXIE *is at the piano just amusing himself when the curtain rises. He is playing "La Boheme" and cutting loose a trifle. There enters, from one of the adjacent offices, a young woman (an employee) known as* GOLDIE. *She may have got her name because of the color of her hair or from the fact that she is really a Miss Goldberg. That point is never brought up in this play, but may some day be the subject of a musical comedy. Anyway, she comes on and busies herself looking over songs at the music shelves, on which the hits of these and other days are piled high.*

GOLDIE
(*busy with her songs*)
"There Never Was a Girl Like Mother."

MAXIE
Maybe it's all for the best. . . . How's the boss? Did he have a good trip?

GOLDIE
He says not. He says in the Middle West they're still wild over "The Rosary."

MAXIE

That looks like a hit.

GOLDIE

Did Benny find you? He was looking for you.

MAXIE

Not yet.

GOLDIE

He's got a new song.

MAXIE

That's good. I was afraid he was written out.

GOLDIE

You'd better hide if you don't want to hear it.

MAXIE

No use—he always gets his man. Besides, I've got to stick around and play Paul's new one, "June Moon."

GOLDIE

Is it any good?

MAXIE

It's got a chance. It's a tune that's easy to remember, but if you should forget it it wouldn't make any difference.

(FRED *plunges in.*)

FRED

Ain't Mr. Hart back yet?

GOLDIE

Not yet.

FRED

Don't you even know what time he's coming?

GOLDIE

Can't tell. His first day back in town—he's probably got a lot of things to do. (*She goes—and pretty disrespectfully, too.*)

FRED

It's half past four. He said he was coming back at two o'clock.

MAXIE

You get used to waiting in this game. I've been in it twenty-two years and nothing's happened yet.

FRED

Paul's coming right in. We want to play the song once before Mr. Hart hears it. I made a change.

MAXIE

Whereabouts.

FRED

In the refrain. We had it "Sweet night-bird, hovering above," now it's "winging aloft." You see, "aloft" means the same like "above."

MAXIE

Only higher.

FRED

I wish I'd known Mr. Hart was going to be

late. I could have slept some more. I had to get up at twelve.

MAXIE

That must be tough after working for the General Electric, where a man's hours are practically his own.

FRED

No. I had to be on the job at eight, every morning. But I went to bed about ten, except Saturday nights, when I seen a picture or something. I didn't know what life was, in Schenectady.

MAXIE

I bet it's an open book to you now.

FRED

Imagine—only going out one night a week and then just to a moving picture show! Down here it's like as if every night was a special night—there's always new places to go to. Miss Fletcher—she's always locating new ones! We was in three last night! Wound up at half past seven this morning, in the Bucket of Blood! There's a lively place! We was the last ones there. Paul and Lucille, they went home at seven, but I and Miss Fletcher stayed and she made the proprietor sell me six bottles of his gin. It's real gin; what they call pro-war. You got to have good gin. It's one of the things they put into what they call a Bronx cocktail.

MAXIE

Is that so?

FRED

Didn't you ever have one?

MAXIE

I don't drink. After I listen to songs all day I don't want liquor. I just go home and take a general anæsthetic.

FRED

I like Bronxes best. They're nothing but gin and orange juice. I don't know why they call it a Bronx.

MAXIE

It's great orange country, up there.

FRED

Anyway, I got a bargain—six bottles for sixty bucks. I give Miss Fletcher three bottles for a present, because if it hadn't been for her I wouldn't have got them. She made the man do it. When you're around with her you just can't resist doing things.

MAXIE

I know. That's why I don't carry a gun.

FRED

She's a great sport, all right. She'd make a wonderful wife—she's such a good pal. I think a man's wife ought to be their pal as well as their sweetheart.

MAXIE

You ought to patent that.

FRED

Say—how much money do you think a fella ought to be making before he could get married? In New York, I mean?

MAXIE

It depends on the girl.

FRED

Buddy De Sylva makes pretty near half a million dollars a year out of just writing lyrics. I guess a man could support a wife on that!

MAXIE

If she was satisfied to ride a bicycle.

FRED

Well, suppose "June Moon" is a big smash? What's the most we could make out of it?

MAXIE

It's hard to say. Take a song like "Swanee River" and it's still going big.

FRED

Yeah, but that's because it was in a big production like "Show Boat."

MAXIE

How's that?

FRED

And with that girl to sing it, that sits on the piano.

MAXIE

You're thinking of Ruby Keeler in "The Wild Duck."

FRED

Well, whoever it was. (*Turns away; suddenly remembers.*) Oh, say! I was over to the tailor's to-day. I'm getting a new suit. Miss Fletcher took me.

MAXIE

That so?

FRED

It's a blue search, with a hair-bone strip. He took my measures all over. Like I was a fighter. I'm thirty-eight inches around my chest, and thirty-three around my stomach, and—I forget my thigh. Anyway, he's got it all wrote down.

MAXIE

I must get a copy.

FRED

If they like "June Moon" I'm going to have an evening dinner coat made, with a Tuxedo. I been wearing an old suit of Paul's, but it's too big. Miss Fletcher says it would hold two like me.

MAXIE

There couldn't be two.

LOGANSPORT

FRED

She was just joking.

MAXIE

I see.

FRED

They've given me a wonderful time, all right. They've introduced me to all the big stars! Gil Boag, and Earl Carroll, and Texas Guinan! I met Texas Guinan!

MAXIE

She's kind of hard to meet, isn't she?

FRED

No. She's one of the friendliest women I ever seen. When the girls told her who I was she said it was a big night in her life—she said she'd always wanted to meet a lyric writer. I wonder what my friends in Schenectady would say if they knew I sat around and talked to Texas Guinan! I didn't know nothing when I lived there. Even the first few weeks I was in New York, I was kind of a sap.

MAXIE

That sounds incredible.

FRED

I went sightseeing to places like the Aquarium, and Grant's Tomb, and the Central Park animal zoo, and thought I was having a great time. A little friend of mine, she took me around places

she'd been to and I thought I was seeing New York because I didn't know no better. She was from a small town, too—she didn't know no better either. Only now I've learned.

MAXIE

What's become of her? Did she go home?

FRED

No, she lives here. She works for a dentist. I must call her up some time and see how she's getting along. (A WINDOW CLEANER *enters. He looks a great deal like a window cleaner.*) What are you going to do?

WINDOW CLEANER

Wash the windows.

FRED

But we're going to try a song here. Can't you go somewheres else first?

WINDOW CLEANER

First! I'm pretty near through for the day. Besides, they're singing songs all over the building. That don't bother me.

FRED

But we're going to sing a new one for Mr. Hart.

WINDOW CLEANER

How much does a man get for writing songs?

FRED

It depends on the song.

WINDOW CLEANER

Say a big hit like "Nearer My God To Thee"?

(*Just before* MAXIE *can brain him,* PAUL *comes on.*)

PAUL

Are you ready?

FRED

Yah. (*To* MAXIE.) Let's do the song now.

MAXIE

Plenty of time.

FRED

I wish Hart would come, so I can get my advance royalty check. Say, where will I get it cashed? At the American Express Company?

MAXIE

Or the 59th Street Bridge.

(BENNY FOX *bounds on. He's a song-writer of the dangerous type.*)

BENNY

Where's Hart?

FRED

He ain't back yet.

BENNY

(*buttonholing* MAXIE)

I've got it this time! "Hello, Tokio!" How's

that for a title? They wanted a novelty number! I guess I've give it to them!

FRED

I and Paul have got a hit!

PAUL

Yeah!

FRED

We think so, anyway.

BENNY

(*paying no attention to them*)

In the verse I've got a fella here in New York that sees a pitcher of a Japanese princess and he's nuts over her, but he can't afford a trip to Japan just on a chance. So he calls her up—get it? "Hello, Tokio!" Get this! Here's the refrain! After he calls her up! (*He plays and sings it, the chorus being as follows*):

"Hello, hello, Tokio!
Girlie, you'll excuse it, please,
If I no spik Japanese.
This little call will leave me broke-o,
But I simply had to say, 'I love you so.'
Believe me, dearie, it's no joke-o;
I'd gladly fly through fire and smoke-o
To share with you the marriage yok-o,
Fairest flower of Tokio-oki-okio!"

(*But that isn't all.* PAUL *and* FRED *start expectantly toward the piano as the finish ap-*

proaches, but BENNY *double-crosses them by plunging quickly into a second chorus. This time the* WINDOW CLEANER, *who has been entranced by the whole thing, starts to beat time with his sponge. He holds the sponge directly over* BENNY'S *head, and the resulting drips do not help the second chorus any. By way of good measure, he then chimes in on the finish, winding up with one "Okio" left over after* BENNY *is through playing.* BENNY *glares at him, and he turns back to his window-washing.*)

BENNY

(*to* MAXIE, *when it's all over*)

Well, what do you think?

MAXIE

It would sound better in Japanese.

BENNY

How about it, Paul?

PAUL

It's a pretty good number.

BENNY

It's a great number! Here's another one—just come to me last night!

(*He starts to play a refrain—a melody so familiar that* MAXIE *calmly pushes him off the bench and finishes it himself.*)

BENNY

(*a bit discouraged*)

Oh, you're too wise! (*He goes.*)

MAXIE

(*starting to play*)

All right, boys!

(*The* WINDOW CLEANER *decides that he doesn't want to hear this one. He opens the window, and a good gale of wind blows most of the papers off the piano.*)

PAUL

Hey!

FRED

What are you trying to do?

WINDOW CLEANER

I'm sorry. I didn't realize it was blowing so hard. I'm glad I ain't out in a boat.

MAXIE

I wish you'd been on the Hesperus. (*The* WINDOW CLEANER *climbs out the window, and presently disappears from view.* MAXIE *and the boys plunge into "June Moon," with* FRED *leading the singing.*)

"Summer winds are sighing in the trees, my dear;
I am sure I know what makes them sigh:
They are sad on moonlight nights like these, my dear;

They are lonely for you, same as I.
Sweetheart, how can you resist their plea,
And the moon you used to share with me?

June Moon, shining above,
Will my true love come soon?
June Moon, I am so blue;
I know that you long for her, too.
Sweet night-bird, winging aloft,
Singing a soft love tune,
Tell her to come to me here,
To me and her dear June Moon."

(*As the song finishes,* EDNA, *the girl of the prologue, quietly enters.* MAXIE *is the first to see her.*)

MAXIE

You got an audience.

FRED

(*none too pleased*)

Hello there, girlie!

EDNA (*ill at ease*)

Hello.

FRED

I wasn't expecting to see you. Ah—this is—you met Mr. Scars. This is Miss Baker, everybody. And this is Mr. Schwartz.

MAXIE

How do you do, Miss Baker?

EDNA

Hello. They told me to come in, but I'm afraid you're busy.

MAXIE

Not a bit.

FRED

We were just polishing off our number. "June Moon."

EDNA

You've finished it, haven't you? It's beautiful.

PAUL (*eagerly*)

Did you like the melody?

(GOLDIE *enters; she has work to do at the music shelves.*)

EDNA

I loved it. And I love Fred's words. I think everybody will.

MAXIE

Are you fond of music?

EDNA

I love it.

MAXIE

We'll send you some good stuff. Goldie! Get Miss Baker's address before she leaves—we'll send her some music.

GOLDIE

(*visions of more work*)

Oh, yeah? (*She goes.*)

EDNA

(*an embarrassed pause*)

I don't want to interrupt. Maybe I'd better be going.

MAXIE

No, no! We'll go. You stay right here!

FRED

But look, if Mr. Hart comes in——

MAXIE

We'll be in Benny's room. Good-by, Miss Baker.

EDNA

Good-by, Mr.——

MAXIE

Schwartz. Maxie Schwartz. It's a Greek name.

(PAUL *and* MAXIE *go.* FRED *and* EDNA *are alone.*)

EDNA

Hello.

FRED

I'm fine. Are you?

EDNA

We're all alone, Fred.

FRED

Huh?

EDNA

Nobody's looking.

FRED

Oh! (*He kisses her—a kiss that would easily get by the censors.*)

EDNA

My, it seems nice again!

FRED

You bet!

EDNA

Fred, what's been the matter?

FRED

Nothing. I just been busy, that's all. I was going to call you as soon as I wasn't busy.

EDNA

I thought maybe you were sick or something. I tried to call you up two mornings—I mean, at your hotel—and they said you couldn't be waked up before one o'clock, I think it was.

FRED

That's only because I been up late the night before, working. We got the song all finished.

EDNA

It's beautiful! I had no idea it would turn out so beautiful! It's beautiful!

FRED

We're going to sing it for Mr. Hart as soon as he gets here.

EDNA

It's a beautiful song. Up to now I felt it was sort of ours together. I mean, the way it started when we were on the train, and then you telling me how it was getting along every day, and now all of a sudden it's finished and I haven't got anything to do with it any more.

FRED

Yes, you have. When it's published I'll make them put your name on the cover—"Dictated to Miss Edna Baker."

EDNA

Oh, Fred, I'd love that! But I'd love something else better.

FRED

What's that?

EDNA

It's been two Sundays since we went anywhere together. Remember the day we took our lunch, and went over on the Palisades all day, and then in the evening we went to the amusement park and went on all the rides! We didn't get home till pretty near twelve o'clock! And then we were going again the next Sunday, only—we didn't.

FRED

But that's because I've been working. I told you.

EDNA

You don't have to work days and nights both.

FRED

(*trying to wriggle out*)

I have to work when Paul feels like it. Music writers don't keep no hours—they work when they're inspired. And it ain't just writing the songs that takes time. You have to go around places, and keep in contract with the other boys, so you get new notions. You got to keep getting new notions in this game.

EDNA

What kind of places do you have to go to?

FRED

You know—places where they have music.

EDNA

You mean—night clubs?

FRED

Some of them.

EDNA

Just you and Mr. Sears?

FRED

Well, generally we all go together.

EDNA

Who else?

FRED

Paul's wife. Lucille, her name is.

(BENNY *starts to come on; stops as he sees them.*)

BENNY

(So *graciously, as though the interruption had been the other way around*)

That's all right. (*Withdraws.*)

EDNA

Doesn't anybody else go along, to sort of even up the party?

FRED

(*a second's hesitation; then he blurts it out*)

Nobody you know! I hardly know her myself. She just comes along because she's Lucille's sister and lives there.

EDNA

Oh!

FRED

You can't leave her home by herself. She's timid.

EDNA

Does she know about—me, Fred?

FRED

Huh?

EDNA

Didn't you ever tell her about—me?

FRED

Well, you see, we just—it's only business, and there hasn't nothing like that come up.

EDNA

What's she like, Fred?

FRED

I don't know. She——

EDNA

(*hard at work*)

A girl like she has probably got lots of beautiful clothes. She probably makes little me look like nothing.

FRED

That part don't matter. It wouldn't make no difference to me if she had all the clothes in the world. Or if she was bare, either.

EDNA

Is she—very pretty?

FRED

Yah, she—I hardly ever noticed if she was pretty or not.

EDNA

What's her name?

FRED

Miss Fletcher.

EDNA

I mean her first name.

FRED

I think they call her Eileen.

EDNA

That's a beautiful name. It's a lot nicer than mine, don't you think?

FRED

It's just a different name.

EDNA

Is she blonde or brunette?

FRED

Both—I mean she's red-headed. That is, I never paid much attention.

EDNA

How old is she?

FRED

I don't know.

EDNA

Older than I am?

FRED

A little bit, I guess. I guess she must be. She's been on the stage.

EDNA

(*putting across a little mild horror*)

Honestly, Fred?

FRED

Yah, but don't think—I mean, that don't mean anything.

EDNA

Oh, Fred, you want to be careful! Because you take a woman like she, that's close to forty or more—

FRED

She ain't forty.

EDNA

(*conceding two years*)

Well, thirty-eight. And she sees a young boy who almost any woman would be proud to win your affection, and there isn't anything she might not stoop to, to entangle you.

FRED

There won't no woman untangle me.

EDNA

You can't tell, Fred—the most terrible things can happen. There was a near friend of mine, a man, and he was acquainted with a count, an international count, and he came here to New York and one night they went on a wild party and he fell in love with a beautiful chorus girl from the Metropolitan Opera Company—I forgot the name of the opera. And he bought her pearls and diamonds, and in less than a week's time he found out they was both married. That's just what could happen to you, dear.

FRED

Who found out who was married?

EDNA

Both of them were married—the count and the girl.

FRED

He must have been a fine count, not to know he was married.

EDNA

Fred, doesn't it cost an awful lot of money when you go around to all these places—or do they take you?

FRED

Well, that part's going to be all right, because as soon as they take our song I'll get what they call an advance royalties. And of course after it's a big hit I'll have plenty of money.

EDNA

I see.

FRED

Only the first thing I'm going to do—I mean, when I get my advance royalties—I'm going to pay you back that little loan.

EDNA

That doesn't matter, Fred.

FRED

But I don't like owing money to a girl. Especially a girl.

EDNA

But it's all right when two people are like you and I. That makes it all right. I'd give you everything I've got, only I'm afraid I'm not going to have very much from now on.

FRED

What do you mean?

EDNA

I wasn't going to tell you, but I haven't got my position any more. I mean, with Doctor.

FRED

You mean you quit?

EDNA

He discharged me.

FRED

What for?

EDNA

I made a mistake. I gave Mr. Mowrey's appointment to Mr. Treadwell, and Doctor scraped Mr. Treadwell's bones instead of Mr. Mowrey's.

FRED

I'm terrible sorry, Eddie. Gosh, I wish there was something I could do about it.

EDNA

(*snapping him up*)

There is, Fred, if you felt like doing it.

FRED

What?

EDNA

Are you going to be busy—after they hear the song?

FRED

Well, I'm afraid so—to-night. I got to work with Paul.

EDNA

Well, then, before that. After Mr. Hart hears it. Oh, Fred, couldn't I stay and hear it too?

FRED

Oh, no, Eddie. When Mr. Hart's hearing a new number he can't have nobody around. He's got to consecrate.

EDNA

Oh!

FRED

I'll tell you what. You can wait in the reception room or somewheres, and the minute he's heard it I'll come and tell you what he says.

EDNA

Oh, Fred, that's grand! Then can we go somewhere together for a little while? Have a soda or something?

FRED

Yah, I guess so.

EDNA

Oh, Fred, I'm so glad! You do care a little, then? I mean, you do care whether you—see me?

FRED

Of course I do. Sure. Certainly.

EDNA

Oh, Fred! (*She presents herself impulsively. He kisses her.*) Everything seems all right again now. I don't care about losing my position any more.

FRED

Yah, but— (MR. HART *finally arrives. A big man, and important-looking. He crosses the room enroute to his own office.*) Oh, Mr. Hart! Mr. Hart!

HART

What?

FRED

We've been waiting for you! We're all ready!

HART

Ready with what?

FRED

The new number. We'll go through it for you if you'll just wait a minute.

HART

What number?

FRED

"June Moon." The number I wrote with Paul Sears.

HART

Oh! (*Starts away.*)

FRED

I'll get he and Maxie and we'll run it through for you.

HART

That's very thoughtful. (*But he goes.*)

FRED

Yes, sir. Paul! Maxie! All right, Eddie, you

go in there and as soon as the song's over I'll come and tell you.

EDNA

All right, dear.

PAUL (*coming in*)

Did Hart get back?

FRED

Yah! He went in there! I told him we was ready! Where's Maxie?

PAUL

He's coming! (*And so he does.*)

MAXIE

Well! Are we all set?

FRED

He's here, but he went in there! He came in, and I talked to him, and he went out!

PAUL

What do you think we better do?

MAXIE

How about throwing a cordon around the building? (*He goes into* HART'S *office.*)

PAUL

Maxie'll bring him.

FRED

(*trying his voice*)

"June Moon"— (*Suddenly sees* EDNA *again.*) All right, Eddie, we're going to sing it now.

EDNA

All right, dear. I can wait happy now. (*She goes.*)

(*The* WINDOW CLEANER *climbs through the window again.*)

FRED

Hey! You can't work here now!

WINDOW CLEANER

What?

(MAXIE *comes back, bringing* HART.)

MAXIE

Here we are!

HART

All right—let's have it. What's the name of this song? (BENNY *bounds on, following* HART.)

BENNY

Are you ready, Boss?

HART

What?

BENNY

For "Tokio!"

MAXIE

Listen, Joe—these boys have been waiting since two o'clock.

HART

All right, all right. Let's have it. What's the name of it?

FRED

"June Moon."

BENNY (*bitingly*)

Great idea!

(GOLDIE *enters.*)

GOLDIE

Pardon me, Mr. Hart. Mr. Wayburn's on the wire.

HART

Can't talk to him now. Go ahead, boys! What's this song called?

GOLDIE

He wants to know if he can use the "Java" number to-night. It's a benefit.

HART

Who for? Him?

GOLDIE

I think he said the Widows of Long Island Commuters.

HART

Oh, sure. Tell him he can have it if he pays for it.

GOLDIE

Yes, sir! (*Goes.*)

HART

That's a great number, "Java." Great number.

BENNY

Yes, sir.

HART

(*very much the big man*)

Do you boys want a sure-fire idea?

PAUL

Yes.

BENNY

Yes.

FRED

Yes, sir.

WINDOW CLEANER

(*just one of the boys*)

Yeah!

HART

Write a war song. Just have it ready—in case.

FRED

Is there going to be a war?

HART

(*taking them all in*)

I won't say yes and I won't say no. But in this little swing around the West I had a chance to sort of feel out the common people. (*Grows very confidential.*) I'll tell you something. I'm not a bit comfortable about the Mexican situation.

WINDOW CLEANER

Me neither.

HART

It's a dangerous situation. I don't like it. I don't like it a bit. (*A long, low whistle from*

BENNY.) Wouldn't surprise me at all if something happened and happened soon. And when it does, the first fellow in the field is going to clean up. You boys want to watch the papers—be ready for an emergency. Not only war, but these aeroplane flights all over the place—television—all the big inventions. (*A man named* BRAINARD *comes in—just a stranger.*) What is it?

BRAINARD

Have you seen a couple of men?

HART

What?

BRAINARD

Have you seen a couple of men? There's two of them.

HART

What men?

BRAINARD

From our office. One of them's had his appendix out.

HART

What office? Where are you from?

BRAINARD

Devlin, Devlin, Stewart and Devlin.

MAXIE

How did Stewart crash in? Marry one of the Devlin girls?

BRAINARD

No. Only one of the Devlins has got a daughter. She's Mrs. Carl Bishop, the architect.

HART

For God's sake! Get out of here, will you?

BRAINARD

But I got to find them.

HART

Well, they're not here. What would they be doing here?

BRAINARD

This is their day in this building.

HART

We're busy now. Come in to-morrow.

BRAINARD

They won't be here to-morrow.

HART

Listen to me; I don't know who you are or where you're from——

(GOLDIE *enters.*)

GOLDIE

Beg pardon, Mr. Hart!

HART

Now what?

GOLDIE

George Gershwin's out there.

HART

George Gershwin!

GOLDIE

Yes, sir.

HART

My God! (*He hurries out.*)

FRED

Who is it?

WINDOW CLEANER

George Gershwin. (*He also hurries out.*)

BRAINARD

Yeah! (BRAINARD, *after a second's hesitation, also goes, hurrying a little.* BENNY *is next to go.*)

PAUL (*to* FRED)

Did you ever see him?

FRED

No.

PAUL

He stole my rhapsody. (*He and* FRED *go.*)

(MAXIE *runs a careless scale; gets up from the piano.*)

GOLDIE

Aren't you going out to see him?

MAXIE

Make him come to me. (*Goes off the other way.*)

(EILEEN *and* LUCILLE *come on*—EILEEN *leads the way and seems thoroughly at home.*)

EILEEN

Where's everybody?

LUCILLE

Hello, Goldie.

GOLDIE

Good afternoon, Mrs. Sears.

EILEEN (*to* GOLDIE)

I see you've moved the piano.

GOLDIE (*with vast impertinence*)

Not me! (*She goes; the women are alone.*)

LUCILLE

Well, here we are! Why don't you go in and say hello to Hart?

EILEEN

I'd rather run into him accidentally. It looks better.

LUCILLE

You're not as sure of him as you let on.

EILEEN

Yes, I am! Why shouldn't I be?

LUCILLE

Well, the way he went away, in the first place. And he didn't exactly keep the wires hot while he was gone.

EILEEN

He wrote to me, every place he went.

LUCILLE

Yah, if you call picture post-cards writing.

EILEEN

He was busy most of the time. It was a business trip.

LUCILLE

He certainly sent you a beautiful view of the Detroit Athletic Club. (EILEEN *glares at her.*) And that new water-works in Cleveland. A man that didn't care about you would have sent a picture of the *old* water-works. He's kind of a Latin type. Hot-blooded.

EILEEN

You can say all you want to. Just the same, when he finds I've been going out with Stevens he's going to be insanely jealous. You watch him.

LUCILLE

Well, maybe. But he didn't even wire you for a date to-night. It's the first time he hasn't done that.

EILEEN

He's taking it for granted. That's even better.

(*Any prospective reply is cut short by the return of* BENNY.)

BENNY

Hello, there!

LUCILLE

Hello!

BENNY

George Gershwin's outside.

LUCILLE

Yeah?

BENNY

Don't you want to meet him?

LUCILLE

It's too late now.

BENNY

No—he's still there.

LUCILLE

Yah, but I'm not.

BENNY

I was telling him about my new number—"Hello, Tokio!" He said it was a great idea. But I forgot—you ain't heard it. (*He dashes for the piano.*)

LUCILLE

It's all right. I'll take Gershwin's word.

BENNY

He said it would make the nuckelus of a great musical show. It's about a fella that falls in love with a pitcher of a Japanese princess, and he calls her up on the long distance phone.

LUCILLE

Is she sitting home?

BENNY

Yah. Why?

LUCILLE

I just wondered if things were the same over there.

BENNY (*thinking hard*)

Of course in a musical show he and she have got to get together. (*Gets a sudden idea; a snap of the fingers.*) I got it—he flies there! That's what he does—he flies there! (*Now working as if in a trance.*) And he arrives in cherry blossom time!

LUCILLE

Is that a record?

BENNY

What a part for Lindbergh, if he could sing! (*He goes.*)

LUCILLE

We'd better be moving. We're kind of exposed here.

(PAUL *and* FRED *return.*)

FRED

Hello, there! Gee, I'm glad to see you!

PAUL (*not so glad*)

Oh, hello!

EILEEN

Hello!

PAUL

You two can't stay here. We're going to do the song.

FRED

Mr. Hart ain't heard the song yet. Gee, I hope he likes it.

EILEEN

He'll like it all right. Lucille and I have brought you luck.

LUCILLE

Yah. I'm a born rabbit's foot.

PAUL

We don't need luck, with this number.

FRED (*to* EILEEN)

If they take it we'll have some celebration to-night! Won't we!

EILEEN

We can decide that later. I don't know—I may not want to go out to-night.

(MR. HART *comes back. Apparently Gershwin didn't stay long.*)

PAUL

Here we are!

FRED

Oh, Mr. Hart!

HART

(*a little flustered; he had not counted on running into* EILEEN *this way*)

Well! I didn't know we had visitors. Hello, Lucille.

LUCILLE

Hello.

(HART *turns slowly to* EILEEN.)

FRED

(*coming to the rescue*)

This is Miss Fletcher, Mr. Hart. Miss Fletcher's Paul's sister-in-law.

HART

Yes. I've already met Miss Fletcher.

FRED (*still helping*)

Mr. Hart's been off on a trip.

EILEEN

That's very interesting.

FRED

He's been in all the big cities. Chicago, and Cincinnati, and Cleveland——

LUCILLE

I understand Cleveland's got a new waterworks.

(HART *looks at her, dumbly.*)

FRED

Are you ready for our song now, Mr. Hart? I mean "June Moon"?

HART

In a minute. I've a little work to do.

EILEEN (*quickly*)

Fred's been trying very hard to learn the business.

HART (*arrested*)

Yes?

EILEEN

I guess we've been pretty nearly every place, haven't we, hearing the new songs?

FRED

You bet! Miss Fletcher's taken me every place. I think I know now what people want, all right.

HART

(*looking at* FRED *with new interest*)

Oh! So you are a friend of Miss Fletcher's?

FRED

We ain't been acquainted long, but—well, we're pretty good friends. (*To* EILEEN) Aren't we?

EILEEN

Yah!

HART

(*has a thought*)

Suppose you boys come into my office and we'll run this song ever.

FRED

You mean right away!

HART

Yes, of course.

FRED

That's fine. (*Rushing to the piano.*) Where's the lead sheet and the lyrics?

PAUL

Here they are!

FRED

Shall we go right in?

HART

Yes, of course.

FRED

But where's Maxie? We got to have Maxie.

HART

I'll send for him. Now then, who wrote this song?

FRED and PAUL

(*together, as they go through the door*)
I did!
(*The women are once more alone.*)

EILEEN

Did you see that? He's insanely jealous.

LUCILLE

Well, if that's jealousy I'll take a plain lemonade.

EILEEN

You don't know him the way I do! He's burning up!

LUCILLE

He controlled it pretty well. He didn't say anything about a date to-night.

EILEEN

How could he, with Stevens here?

(MAXIE *crosses the stage, enroute to* HART'S *office.*)

MAXIE

Well, it won't be long now. He's going to hear it at last.

LUCILLE

Yah. We're waiting for the verdict.

MAXIE

It's Stevens' first offense. They'll acquit him on the grounds of insanity. (*He is gone.*)

LUCILLE

You know, if they buy that limerick, Stevens'll be getting up a party for to-night. He was talking about it already.

EILEEN

I know.

LUCILLE

What are you going to do about him, anyhow? He's going to be kind of a nuisance with Hart back.

EILEEN

I can handle him. He's so far gone you can tell him anything.

LUCILLE

We certainly do attract song-writers, we Fletcher girls. It's a curse.

EILEEN

He's not a bad kid. I kind of like him. And he might make a lot of money in this game. Plenty of others have done it.

LUCILLE (*slowly*)

I wonder if that damned song *is* any good. All of Paul's stuff sounds just alike to me.

EILEEN

Maybe Stevens' lyrics are just silly enough to get over. I've got kind of a hunch that they are.

LUCILLE

Even if they buy it it won't mean anything to us. Paul's so far ahead of his royalties they'll never catch up. He could write "Madame Butterfly" and it wouldn't even get me a new girdle.

EILEEN

Anyway, I've got Stevens broken in right, whoever gets him. You've got to give me credit for changing some of his ideas. I imagine every week was Thrift Week in Schenectady.

LUCILLE

It's Thrift Year for me. Year after year. (*She drops into a chair.*) And I'm getting pretty sick of it.

EILEEN
Why don't you do something?

LUCILLE
Well, maybe I am.

EILEEN
You are? What?

LUCILLE
(*shakes her head*)
That's all right.

EILEEN
Don't be a fool! What's happened?

LUCILLE
Nothing exactly yet.

EILEEN
Well, what's going to happen?

LUCILLE
I don't know. Nothing.

EILEEN (*pleading*)
Will you tell me?

LUCILLE
(*makes up her mind*)
Remember—Ed Knowlton?

EILEEN
Yes. What about him?

LUCILLE

I ran into him Friday, on Madison Avenue.

EILEEN

Why didn't you tell me?

LUCILLE

Because I knew what you'd say and I wanted to think it out for myself.

EILEEN

What's it all about? What's he doing here?

LUCILLE

He's left Chicago for good. They're living on East Fifty-seventh—he and his wife and the two kids.

EILEEN

Well?

LUCILLE

He still likes me, and I like him.

EILEEN

Has he got any money?

LUCILLE

He makes a lot, but he spends it.

EILEEN

If he likes you that's not a fatal drawback.

LUCILLE

He likes me all right.

EILEEN

Can he get rid of her?

LUCILLE

(*shakes her head*)

No, it's her uncle or something owns the business. But he saw I wasn't happy, and—well, we had a couple of drinks and talked. He kept saying I ought to have nice things,—and that he was willing to give them to me.

EILEEN

Don't tell me you aren't going to do it?

LUCILLE

I'm kind of afraid. Suppose Paul gets inquisitive?

EILEEN

Paul! He doesn't know silk from asbestos. To hell with him anyway! It's time you had some luck!

LUCILLE

I don't know what to do. You and I look at things different. But Ed's so nice. The things he says—they make me feel young again. And it's such a relief to just talk to a man that hates music!

EILEEN

Listen, if you don't do this——

(FRED *runs on, all excitement.*)

FRED

They're going to take it! They've took it! They're crazy about it!

EILEEN

Well, that's fine! I knew they'd like it!

FRED

It's my first song! My first one to be published!

EILEEN

That's wonderful.

LUCILLE

(*wildly unenthusiastic*)

It's quite thrilling.

FRED

They're making me out a check for two hundred and fifty dollars! That's just what they call an advance royalties!

(PAUL *returns.*)

PAUL

They took it all right!

LUCILLE

So Fred said.

EILEEN

Yes!

PAUL

You should have heard what Hart said about the melody.

FRED (*to* EILEEN)

Aren't you glad about the song? Aren't you excited?

EILEEN

(*her mind beyond the door*)

I should say so.

(HART *comes in.*)

HART (*expansively*)

Well, what do you think of this young man? Making good in his first attempt!

EILEEN

It's wonderful!

LUCILLE

Yes, indeed.

HART

And Paul, too. He's written a nice little melody. Did you get your check, Stevens?

FRED

No, sir. Not yet.

HART

Goldie'll bring it to you.

MAXIE

(*crossing to his own office*)

Well, thought you people would be on your way by this time.

EILEEN

We are waiting for Fred's check!

MAXIE

I'll bet you are! (*He's gone.*)

FRED

Mr. Hart! We were all planning on going some place to-night, to celebrate the success of the song. We'd love to have you come along with us, if you can.

(*A moment of embarrassment.* EILEEN *just waits.*)

HART

Well, now, I'd like to do that, but I'm very sorry. (HART *starts talking to* FRED, *but shifts his gaze to* EILEEN.) You see, I just got back from this trip, and I'm tied up with Mr. Goebel to-night.

FRED

Oh, that's too bad.

EILEEN

(*with more meaning*)

Yes, it is.

HART

I'm sure you'll have a wonderful time. Can't tell you how much I'd like to be along. But of course, business comes first.

(*A very beautiful young lady enters. Her name is* MISS RIXEY.)

MISS RIXEY

Hello, Joe. Am I late?

HART

(*after clearing his throat*)

Miss Rixey, isn't it?

MISS RIXEY

(*puzzled at this reception*)

What?

HART

Ah—they told me you were coming.

MISS RIXEY

(*coming right to him*)

You knew damn well I was coming!

HART

(*still trying to cover up*)

Did you bring those orchestrations?

MISS RIXEY

(*holding up a bundle which obviously contains two bottles of liquor*)

You mean this?

HART

(*sunk by this time; grabs her by arm and rushes her into his office*)

Ah—just step into my office and we'll talk business.

MISS RIXEY

Listen, Joe, that driver of yours is so damn dumb——

HART (*loudly*)

Yes, we publish that! Right this way!

LUCILLE

(*airily, when they are gone*)

Well, well, well!

FRED

It's too bad he can't go, but the four of us can have a good time.

EILEEN (*recklessly*)

Have a good time! You bet we can! We're going to have the best time any crowd ever had! Aren't we, Freddy boy? (*Throws her arms around him and kisses him.*)

FRED

We sure are, girlie!

(GOLDIE *comes on.*)

GOLDIE

Here's your check, Mr. Stevens.

PAUL

Great!

EILEEN

Hooray! Here's the check! (*She takes it.*)

FRED

Just in time!

EILEEN

Two hundred and fifty dollars! You've just got to give me a great big kiss!

LUCILLE

Oh, you two!

EILEEN

Do you love me?

FRED

You bet I do!

LUCILLE

Where'll we go for dinner?

PAUL

I want a good steak.

EILEEN

How about the Park Casino?

LUCILLE

Oh, fine! I've never been there! I hear it's marvellous!

EILEEN

They've got the most wonderful band! You'll love it, Freddie boy!

FRED

I will if you're along!

EILEEN

I'm going to be, don't you worry about that! Wherever you are, that's where I'm going to be!

FRED

That suits me all right!

EILEEN

Come on, everybody!

PAUL

Don't forget we got to cash the check.

EILEEN

(*waving the check*)

I should say not! We're not going to forget that, are we, Freddie boy?

FRED

You bet we aren't!

(*They are gone;* GOLDIE *alone is left. She picks out some songs from the shelves.* EDNA, *the girl he left behind him, peeps in, then enters.*)

EDNA

Do you know if they've heard Mr. Stevens's song yet? I mean "June Moon"?

GOLDIE

(*pretty hard-boiled*)

Yah. They did.

EDNA

(*starting brightly forward*)

Was it all right? Did they like it?

GOLDIE

(*surveying her*)

They took it.

EDNA

(*in pleased excitement*)

Really! Where are they? Still in there?

GOLDIE

Not any more. They've all gone.

EDNA

What?

GOLDIE

They went out just a couple of minutes ago.

EDNA

Mr.—Stevens, too?

GOLDIE

Yah. With Mr. Sears and the two girls.

EDNA

Oh! . . . Thank you very much.

(GOLDIE *takes a moment to look her up and down, then goes.* EDNA *stands stock still for a moment, stunned. The door opens and the* WINDOW CLEANER *returns, sponge still in hand. He looks at* EDNA *a bit curiously; the scrutiny is more than she can stand. All she can do is rush out.*)

(*The room belongs to the* WINDOW CLEANER, *and maybe he doesn't realize it. He scampers over to the piano and hits a few tentative notes. Resigning himself to a musical career, he drops his sponge on the window sill and starts picking out the notes of "Hello, Tokio!" Encouraged by his success with the first phrase, he starts again, this time singing it. Then he takes a long breath and starts again, louder this time. He is plunging recklessly into it, and oblivious of his sur-*

roundings, when MAXIE *comes in behind him.* MAXIE *stands perfectly still for a second, taking in the situation. Then he makes up his mind. Turn about, he decides, is fair play. He picks up the sponge and starts feverishly washing the window.*)

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT III

ACT III

The scene is still at Goebel's—the time about a month later. GOLDIE *comes on and goes to the music racks. While she is searching for songs,* BENNY *enters. Except that* BENNY *never just enters—he shoots on.*

BENNY

Where's Hart?

GOLDIE

He's out somewhere.

BENNY

Did you tell him I wanted to see him?

GOLDIE

Yes, but he was on his way out.

BENNY

What did he say?

GOLDIE

Nothing. He just hurried.

BENNY

I've got to see him. I've got a number that will knock his eye out.

GOLDIE

Like "Tokio?"

BENNY

Don't kid me about "Tokio." If ever a man got a crooked deal! Listen——

GOLDIE

I've heard it.

BENNY

You ain't heard it all because I didn't know it myself till last night. Harry Ruby told me at the Friars. It seems that the night I played it there, there was a fella named Stein hanging around.

GOLDIE (*incredulous*)

At the Friars?

BENNY

Well, he hears my number, and he tells these other fellas, and they turn out their damn "Hello, Shanghai!" and beat me to it. It's increditable, but that's what happened. And on top of that Maxie says their number is better than mine because Shanghai's further away than Tokio. I'll kill the two of them the first time I get them alone together, I don't care if they got a thousand friends with them. And that ain't all. They stole my song and I'm going to sue them for perjury.

GOLDIE

I think you'll get it.

BENNY

And it wasn't only a song they stole—it was a whole production. A musical comedy. That's

where the big money is. And that's what I'm going to get into. I'll tell you something. (*Confidentially.*) I'm not going to be with Goebel's much longer.

GOLDIE

I heard that.

BENNY

Who from?

GOLDIE

Mr. Goebel.

BENNY

You couldn't—he doesn't know it yet.

GOLDIE

Oh!

BENNY

I'm quitting and they can see how they like that. They can get along with Stevens and his brilliant ideas. "June Moon!" The lucky saphead!

GOLDIE

It was on at five different stations last night.

BENNY

The oldest idea in the world! And I write a great novelty number and it's stole off me!

(PAUL *arrives.*)

PAUL (*to* GOLDIE)

Have you seen Stevens?

BENNY

Want to hear a great song?

PAUL (*still to* GOLDIE)

Have you?

GOLDIE

He hasn't come in.

BENNY

Get this, Paul! Tell me if you don't think it'll slaughter them! (BENNY *hits one chord;* HART *enters.*) Hello, Boss! You're just in time!

HART

(*a wave of the hand that takes care of* BENNY *for the moment*)

Where's Stevens? Is he in yet?

PAUL

I'm waiting for him myself.

HART (*to* GOLDIE)

Call his hotel. See if he's there.

GOLDIE

I did a while ago. He was out.

HART

See if they know where to get a hold of him. (GOLDIE *goes. She loves her work, this girl.*) How are you coming with the new numbers?

PAUL

(*uncomfortably*)

Pretty good, only Fred don't seem to want to work lately. He was going to meet me here at eleven.

HART

He ought to be getting busy. He's not going to work on his honeymoon.

PAUL

No, sir.

HART

When he comes in, tell him I'd like to see him.

PAUL

Yes, sir. (*He goes out.*)

BENNY

(*stopping* HART *before he can escape*)

Listen, Mr. Hart! It won't take me two minutes to show you this number. It's sure to hit you.

HART

Anything like "Tokio"?

BENNY

I had a tough break on that, Mr. Hart—that "Hello, Shanghai." Why, do you know what? There ain't even a telephone between New York and Shanghai!

HART

Well, we'll have one put in. (MAXIE *comes on.*) Oh, Maxie, I was just going to send for you. There's a young fellow outside who has written a song.

MAXIE

Who is it?

HART

That's just the point. Somebody my sister-in-law sent, so do whatever you can for him. He's only sixteen years old.

MAXIE

And still grinding them out?

HART

It's probably one of those things, but *you* know ——you never can tell. Anything can happen, after "June Moon."

MAXIE

As long as you've brought that up, would you mind answering me a riddle?

HART

What is it?

MAXIE

Did you have any idea that was going to be a hit? Honestly, now?

HART (*hesitantly*)

Well, I'll tell you, Maxie——

MAXIE (*starts to leave*)

That's all I wanted to know.

HART

Do whatever you can for the lad, Maxie. He came all the way from Plainfield.

MAXIE

He'll get home safe. (*He goes.*)

BENNY

(*still trying*)

Listen, Mr. Hart, won't you hear this?

HART

Hear what?

BENNY

This number. The title is "Give Our Child A Name." It'll make "June Moon" sound like a dirge. It's a couple that give birth to a little one in two-four tempo.

HART

It won't do you any good knocking Stevens's number.

BENNY

I ain't knocking his lousy number, but get this, Mr. Hart! (*He jumps to the piano.*)

"Should a father's carnal sins
Blight the life of babykins?
All I ask is give our child a——"

(*His hands descend on the keyboard in an annoyed discord as* FRED *and* EILEEN *enter.*)

HART

Well! Here's the groom at last!

(BENNY *goes, banging the door behind him.*)

EILEEN

You can blame it on me. I've been making him get some new clothes.

HART

Well, you two are certainly to be congratulated.

EILEEN

Thanks.

FRED

Much obliged.

HART

But don't forget your work. When do you sail?

EILEEN

Saturday.

FRED

We sail Saturday.

HART

(*having his bit of fun*)

I certainly envy you. I wish I could go along.

FRED

There's no chance, I suppose?

HART

Not at this time of year. (*Visibly enjoying the situation.*) If you could postpone it a month——

FRED (*brightening*)

Yah, that might be a good idea!

EILEEN

Don't be silly!

FRED

I forgot. Eileen wants to be on the Riveeria in the season.

HART

I see. Well, I hope they don't take you at Monte Carlo.

FRED

If they don't take us there we can go somewheres else.

HART

Anyhow, be sure to get your work done. (*He starts to go.*)

EILEEN

Oh, Mr. Hart!

HART

Yes?

EILEEN

Fred wants to speak to you about something else.

FRED (*quickly*)

No, I don't.

EILEEN

But you do, dear.

FRED

I'll ask you later.

HART

Is anything the matter?

FRED

No, no! It wasn't—I just——

HART

Well, I'll be in my office, if you want me. (*He leaves.*)

EILEEN

Why didn't you ask him when you had a chance?

FRED (*weakly*)

They've advanced me so much already.

EILEEN

But sweetheart, you promised me. You said you'd ask him to-day.

FRED

I will after while. I got to find Paul now—I got to go to work.

EILEEN

Oh, don't go to work yet. You never have any time for me. You don't realize I want to be loved once in a while.

FRED

I held your hand in the taxi.

EILEEN

Just think! Only three more days till we belong to each other. Isn't it marvellous!

FRED

It's four, ain't it?

EILEEN

Four till we sail. Only three till we get married.

FRED

I wished it wasn't quite so soon.

EILEEN

What?

FRED

I mean, on account of those two numbers.

EILEEN

Don't forget—you're to ask him for a thousand dollars advance on each of them.

FRED

But that's too much! I've borrowed thirty-five hundred dollars off them already on "June Moon" —maybe more than my royalties will amount to altogether.

EILEEN

Don't be ridiculous! That number will still be selling when you're dead.

FRED

I won't care so much then.

EILEEN

Your children will. (FRED *is embarrassed.*) Don't you want children, dear?

FRED

I don't get along with them very good.

EILEEN

You would with your own.

FRED

No. I figure I'd get along better with other people's, because they'd go home once in a while.

EILEEN

We needn't think of that now. Let's just think of you and me, all alone on that big boat.

FRED

We won't be alone. The fella said it would be pretty near full.

EILEEN

But we don't have to see anybody. A bride and groom don't generally go around much—they're supposed to be so awfully in love.

FRED

I'll want to eat once in a while.

EILEEN

They'll serve us in our cabin.

FRED

It'll be kind of close quarters. Maybe I could go in the dining-room and order you a meal sent up.

EILEEN

And leave me all alone? I'd be scared to death.

FRED

It's just as dangerous in the dining-room as the bedroom. If the ship sinks, pretty near all the rooms will be under water.

EILEEN

Let's not think about such things. Just think of the pleasant side. London and Paris—I'm glad

we're going to Paris first, so I can get some clothes.

FRED

Clothes? What have you been buying?

EILEEN

They're all right for the ship, dear, but not the Riviera. Don't you want to be proud of me—the way I look?

FRED

But if you're going to stay in your cabin all the time you won't need nothing but a Mother Hubbard.

(MAXIE *comes back;* EILEEN *automatically starts to go.*)

MAXIE

Well! All ready for the big trip?

FRED

Pretty near. The boat sails Saturday.

MAXIE

I don't know what you want to go to Europe for.

EILEEN (*bristling*)

Why not?

MAXIE

Because he's never been there. A song-writer never goes anywhere for the first time—they're always going back to places. Back to Indiana—back, back to Baltimore.

EILEEN (*annoyed*)

Fred, are you going to talk to Mr. Hart?

FRED

Yes, ma'am.

EILEEN

Well, this would be a good time. (*She goes, in about medium dudgeon.*)

FRED

I'd like to be going back, back to Schenectady, but Eileen's got her heart set on Europe.

MAXIE

I hear it's quite a place.

FRED

Yes, I guess so. I was kind of excited about it at first, but now I don't know—I don't want to go so bad. I'm kind of tired, I guess—the way we been going it lately. I'm kind of behind on my sleep.

MAXIE (*appraisingly*)

But you've been having a lot of fun. All those night clubs.

FRED

I did at first—dancing and everything—but now my feet's so sore I have to take a bath every day. You might as well take a whole bath as just your feet. And they ache so I can't sleep in them. Gosh, I'm so tired all the time. I don't have time to sleep, anyway. We shop till the stores is closed,

and then we get dressed up for dinner and the evening. If I don't get some rest soon I'll have a nervous break-up. And everything costs so much. Eileen wants a taxi if she's only going in the other room.

MAXIE

This trip to Europe—that's going to be kind of expensive, too, ain't it?

FRED

Yes. I always thought I'd save my money, if I ever got any.

MAXIE

You picked out a thrifty girl, all right.

FRED

I kind of get thinking sometimes, maybe a man like I that's just breaking in, maybe he shouldn't get married so soon, especially a woman that's got to have so many clothes. Sometimes I think it would be better if I hadn't got engaged.

MAXIE

(*feeling his way*)

I read of a case once, in Michigan, where a man was engaged to a girl and didn't marry her.

FRED

I didn't read that. Have you got the clippings?

MAXIE

No. But my memory's pretty good. For in-

stance, I remember a mighty nice little girl that was here to see you one time. I even remember her name—Miss Baker.

FRED (*nervously*)

Maxie, you haven't seen her or anything, have you?

MAXIE

(*the picture of innocence*)

Me? No. Why?

FRED (*uneasily*)

I guess I shouldn't be thinking of her at a time like this——

MAXIE

Are you?

FRED

I don't know. Sometimes I——

(GOLDIE *enters, bound for those same old music shelves. It is a welcome interruption so far as* FRED *is concerned.*)

FRED

I got to find Paul. I got to do some work. (*He withdraws.*)

MAXIE

(*looking after him*)

Just one of the Happiness boys—he and Pagliacco.

GOLDIE (*with her songs*)

Mother song and mother song—why don't they ever write about their uncle?

MAXIE (*thoughtfully*)

Suppose I told you I was thinking of doing something about him?

GOLDIE

What?

MAXIE

Suppose I went even further and told you I'd already done it?

GOLDIE

What are you talking about?

MAXIE

I'm talking about a little girl that came in here to see Stevens about a month ago. The one you sent the music to.

GOLDIE

Oh!

MAXIE

She's the one he ought to be marrying, instead of this whatever-she-is.

GOLDIE

(*with monumental indifference*)

My God, what's the difference who marries a lyric writer? (*She goes.*)

(MAXIE *stands a moment, deep in thought. He drifts to the piano—aimlessly, instinctively. Drops onto the bench; his fingers slide over the keys. But he is not thinking about his music.*)

(*And then* LUCILLE *enters. A new* LUCILLE, *patently. She wears a gorgeous red dress, topped off with a coat of the same material, trimmed in white fur. But it's not only the clothes. She has that note of assurance that only the perfectly dressed woman can have. She comes into the room slowly, confidently.*)

MAXIE

(*as he looks her over*)

Hello.

LUCILLE

Where's everybody?

MAXIE

Paul's outside somewhere. I think he's working.

LUCILLE

Has Eileen been here?

MAXIE

She's around.

LUCILLE

Thanks.

MAXIE

All dressed up to-day.

LUCILLE

Not especially.

MAXIE

You look like a bride yourself.

(LUCILLE *gives a visible start; the situation is saved by the entrance of* EILEEN.)

EILEEN

Hello! I thought I saw you!

MAXIE

Well, I've got to get busy, if you'll excuse me. (*He goes.*)

EILEEN

(*observing the dress*)

Oh, say, it's a peach!

LUCILLE

Do you like it?

EILEEN

You bet! (*She lowers her voice.*) Have you got a date?

LUCILLE

I think so. I'm to phone his office later on. (*She is not at ease.*)

EILEEN

(*a look at her watch*)

What do you say we have lunch?

LUCILLE

Wait a minute.

EILEEN

What's the matter?

LUCILLE

I don't want to go out there yet.

EILEEN

Why not?

LUCILLE

I don't feel like running into Paul.

EILEEN

Aren't you ever going to get over that? What is there to be afraid of?

LUCILLE

I don't know. I'm just nervous.

EILEEN

He'll never guess anything. He's blind and always has been.

LUCILLE

Thanks!

EILEEN

You know what I mean. All he thinks about's his tunes. We've got a chance to be happy, you and I—for a while, anyhow. Let's take it!

LUCILLE

You're a funny one to figure out.

EILEEN

Why?

LUCILLE

Taking up with Stevens this way. You always lectured me about Paul—his being a song-writer. And now you're going to go and do the same thing.

EILEEN

Stevens is different. He's a nice kid. Of course, he's not exactly what you'd call—bright.

LUCILLE

Bright? He's not even born yet.
(PAUL *enters.*)

PAUL

Oh, hello.

LUCILLE

Hello.

PAUL

What's that—a new dress?

LUCILLE
(*a silly question*)

This?

EILEEN
(*sensing a storm*)

I'll meet you outside, Lucille.

LUCILLE

Wait a minute—I'll go with you.

PAUL

No, I want to talk to you.

LUCILLE (*scared*)

What?

PAUL
(*a look at* EILEEN)

Stay in here a minute.

LUCILLE

What for?

EILEEN

I'll go on out. I want to talk to Fred. (*She escapes, and glad of the chance.*)

LUCILLE

What's the matter?

PAUL

(*on the dress again*)

That *is* new, isn't it?

LUCILLE

Don't you think it's about time?

PAUL

How much was it?

LUCILLE

It won't come due for a while. I may take care of it myself.

PAUL

I can take care of it, if it ain't too soon.

LUCILLE

I've got to go on out. Eileen's waiting.

PAUL

Hold on! (LUCILLE *turns, not knowing what to expect.*) That's what I want to talk to you about.

LUCILLE

What?

PAUL

About her and Fred.

LUCILLE (*in vast relief*)

Oh!

PAUL

She's got him so he can't hardly work at all. I don't know when we're going to finish the new numbers.

LUCILLE

Of course you can finish them.

PAUL

But taking him off on this trip! It's going to cost him a million dollars. And just when we're beginning to work good together!

LUCILLE

You can write other numbers while he's gone.

PAUL

But that ain't the point. I mean—do you think we ought to do it?

LUCILLE

Do what?

PAUL

Do you think they ought to go ahead and get married? He's a hell of a nice guy—I've kind of got to like him.

LUCILLE

What of it? Eileen's a nice girl.

PAUL

But—you know what I mean. Isn't it kind of

a dirty trick—I mean, after the way Eileen—(LUCILLE *gives him a sharp look.*) Well, Hart and everything?

LUCILLE

(*in a low tone*)

You ought to have more sense.

PAUL

Just the same, I don't feel right about it. And the way she's throwing his money around—like it was confetti. Spending every nickel she can get on herself! Clothes, clothes——

LUCILLE

You can't go to Europe in a life belt.

PAUL

Do you know what she spent in one afternoon, yesterday? Close to four hundred dollars. He pretty near cried when he told me. And I don't blame him. He's too nice a kid.

LUCILLE

She doesn't spend that every day.

PAUL

She shouldn't have spent it at all. You should have had more sense than to let her.

LUCILLE

(*flaring a little*)

How could I stop her? I wasn't there!

PAUL

Yes, you were! You were with her all afternoon.

LUCILLE

(*quickly covering herself*)

Oh, yes. I thought you meant the day before.

PAUL

It was Sunday, the day before.

LUCILLE

Yah—I just mixed up, that's all.

PAUL

Anyhow, something ought to be done about it. She's got him in debt enough.

LUCILLE (*nervously*)

I'll talk to her about it. (*Starts out.*) Don't you say anything to her. Don't say anything about—I mean, what she spent yesterday afternoon. I'll go and talk to her. (*She gets away.*)

(PAUL *stands in thought for a moment; then he starts to go.* BENNY *catches him in the act.*)

BENNY

Can you listen to that number?

PAUL

What?

BENNY

Can you hear that number now?

PAUL

Aw—I got to work, Benny. (*Goes.*)
(GOLDIE *immediately enters.*)

BENNY

Where's Hart?

GOLDIE

Can't you think up a new question?

BENNY

Where is he?

GOLDIE

He's out getting a permanent. (*And she goes.*)
(BENNY *almost gives up; is about to leave. But then there arrives the beautiful young woman known as* MISS RIXEY. *She heads for* HART'S *door.*)

BENNY

(*without much hope*)
Say, do you want to hear a new song?

MISS RIXEY

Sure!

BENNY

(*bowled over by this answer*)
What?

MISS RIXEY

I said sure.

BENNY

(*darts to the piano and starts*)

"Should a father's carnal sins
Blight the life of babykins?
All I ask is give our child——"

(*But* Miss Rixey *has not waited. Something about the rhythm has caught her ear, and she has simply gone into her dance. It has expressed itself in the form of a neat Off-to-Buffalo, right through the door and into* Hart's *office. And perhaps further.*)

(Benny *sits looking after her, stunned. As he does so* Edna *enters—a bit uncertainly, as is her wont, but she enters.*)

Benny

(*willing to take anything*)

Hello, kid.

Edna

Hello.

Benny

Want to see somebody?

Edna

I'll be going.

Benny

Wait—you want to hear a great song? You know who I am, don't you? I'm Benny Fox, the hit-writer. I write words and music both. I'm like Berlin, only more pathetic. Now I got a new one. It's about a couple that have a baby without benefit to a clergyman, and you can dance to it. (*He plays it.*)

"Should a father's carnal sins
Blight the life of babykins?

All I ask is give our child a name—I mean a last name.
I don't ask to share your life,
Live with you as man and wife;
All I ask is give our child a name—
Not just a first name."

(MAXIE *comes on.*) Hello, Maxie. I'll start over so you can get this.

"Should a father's carnal sins——"

MAXIE
(*looking at* EDNA)
Wait a minute! Isn't this—Miss Baker?

EDNA
And you're Mr. Schwartz.

MAXIE
Correct!

BENNY
Come on, Maxie! Get a load of this!

"Should a father's carnal sins——"

MAXIE
Go back to your cell! We want to talk!

BENNY
But she wants to hear this number!

MAXIE
(*gets an idea*)
Listen! You don't know who she is.

BENNY

No.

MAXIE

Well! Remember what happened to "Tokio." (*It's a case of the burnt child.* BENNY *scoots out, throwing a look back at* EDNA *as he goes.*) My, but I'm glad to see you!

EDNA

It's nice of you to say so, anyway.

MAXIE

I guess it was kind of nervy of me, calling you up that way. Hope you didn't mind.

EDNA

Why—no. I—I thought it was very friendly.

MAXIE

Of course it isn't really any of my business exactly, but—nobody else was doing anything, so I thought I would. Probably you can guess who it's about.

EDNA

Tell me about him! What's happened? What's happened to him?

MAXIE

Do you mind if I ask a question? I think I know the answer.

EDNA

What?

MAXIE

You're in love with him, aren't you? (EDNA *turns away.*) You know, you can tell me. I'm for you—I want to help you. You do—love him? (EDNA *nods.*) Enough to keep him from—ruining himself?

EDNA

How do you mean?

MAXIE

He's engaged to be married. You know that?

EDNA

I—supposed that was it.

MAXIE

But he's not happy. He's not in love with her.

EDNA

(*breaking out*)

I can't do anything! He doesn't love me! He never did!

MAXIE

Somebody's got to do something. He's not a fellow that can think for himself. They left that out.

EDNA

Oh, why did you make me come here? I shouldn't have done it—I don't know why I did! I've been trying every way to forget him—I went away, and I didn't see anybody, and then I went around with lots of people—it only made it worse.

I kept wanting to call him up, and once I did, only—I hung up before he could come to the telephone.

MAXIE

Let me bring him in here.

EDNA

No, no! I don't want to talk to him! I mustn't!

MAXIE

But he's in trouble. And you're the only one that can help him.

EDNA

He don't want to see *me!*

MAXIE

Let me tell him you're here. It can't do any harm. (EDNA *is silent.*) You needn't answer. Only promise me one thing.

EDNA

What?

MAXIE

No matter what happens, come and see me afterward. Will you? (EDNA *nods.*) The second door on the left, down that hall. (MAXIE *goes.* EDNA *is alone for a moment. Two moments, even. Then a pretty excited* FRED *comes on.*)

FRED

Hello, Eddie.

EDNA

Hello.

FRED

I'm awful glad to see you, Eddie! Gee, but I'm glad to see you!

EDNA

I didn't really come to—I mean, it was Mr. Schwartz that made me talk to you.

FRED

My, but it's great to see you again! I didn't know how great it would be.

EDNA

I'm glad to see you, too, Fred. I'm glad you're well and that you're going to be—happy.

FRED

I been thinking about you, Eddie—an awful lot, lately. I been waking up in the morning, thinking about you.

EDNA

Are you waking up in the morning again, Fred?

FRED

I been going to call you up to tell you about it. We used to have a lot of fun together. (*Eagerly.*) Remember that day in Van Cortlandt Park when I lost my watch and that little boy found it?

EDNA

You gave him a nickel.

FRED

It was a dime. And he said, "Keep it and buy

your wife a raddio set." He thought we was married. (*He laughs, as though trying to induce a mood of merriment in* EDNA.)

EDNA

I remember.

FRED

You was embarrassed, all right. You got red.

EDNA

Any girl would.

FRED

And then coming back we forgot to change at Seventy-second Street. That is, you forgot. I didn't know any better.

EDNA

I just wasn't thinking.

FRED

We had to go all the way down to Times Square. That's when we saw the flea circus.

EDNA

You said one of the fleas reminded you of a man in Schenectady.

FRED

Yeah. Perry Robinson. He always walked like he'd just picked up a nail. (FRED *drops the pretense and comes out with it.*) Eddie, did Maxie say anything to you? About me.

EDNA (*in agony*)

He said you were going to be married, Fred. I should have congratulated you.

FRED (*suddenly*)

I don't want to any more, Eddie! I know it now! I don't want to!

EDNA

Don't say that, Fred! Don't! Don't say it unless you mean it! I couldn't stand it!

FRED

But I do mean it, Eddie! I mean it more than anything in the——

(EILEEN *comes on. You knew she would.*)

EILEEN (*rather gaily*)

I'm sorry.

FRED

(*as* EDNA *shows signs of bolting*)

No—don't go away. This is—Miss Fletcher.

EILEEN (*appraisingly*)

Hello.

FRED

And this is Miss Baker. She's the little girl—I mean, I used to know her when——

EDNA

(*who can't stand it*)

I'll be going if you don't mind. Good-by, Fred.

FRED

No—look! Don't go away!

EDNA

Yes, I must! I—good-by, Miss Fletcher! (*She rushes off.* FRED *hesitates for a second; then starts out after her.*)

EILEEN

Fred!

FRED (*stopping short*)

Huh?

EILEEN

Why, what's the matter with you? One would almost think it was her you were going to marry instead of me.

FRED (*facing her*)

I got to tell you something.

EILEEN

Why, what is it?

FRED

I don't want to get married! I mean—you and I!

EILEEN

Do you know what you're saying?

FRED

I can't help it! I shouldn't ever have done it! I didn't realize!

EILEEN

Well! This is a fine time to tell me! Why didn't you wait till Friday!

FRED

I just now realized it!

EILEEN

I see! And you think all you have to do is tell me and that settles it. Well, it doesn't work quite that way!

FRED

What?

EILEEN

You think I'm going to stand by and let you throw me over for that little snip!

FRED

She is not!

EILEEN

Not by a damned sight! I'll sue her for alienation—that's what I'll do.

FRED

You can't She was born right here in New York State!

EILEEN

You seem to have forgotten something! Did you beg me to marry you or didn't you?

FRED

But I didn't know then.

EILEEN

You seem to have forgotten that I was engaged to another man, and that you took me away from him! What about that?

FRED

I can't help it.

EILEEN

(*a change of method*)

But that isn't the main thing. I love you, Freddy. You made me love you. I didn't at first, but you made me. And now you want to leave me.

FRED

But you don't want me to marry you, if I feel that way.

EILEEN

What would you think of a man that made a girl love him, when she was already engaged, and then threw her over? Do you think that would be quite—honorable?

FRED

(*with sudden inspiration*)

Honorable! That's just what I got to be! That's why I can't marry you!

EILEEN

What do you mean?

FRED

I mean I got to marry another girl, to save her from—from worse than death.

EILEEN

That little kid? (*A gesture.*)

FRED

Yes!

EILEEN

You mean you've got her in trouble?

FRED

Yes! That's it!

EILEEN

I don't believe you! I'm going to call her back!

FRED (*stopping her*)

No, no! You mustn't tell her that!

EILEEN

Why not?

FRED

I—I want to surprise her.

EILEEN

(*a scornful surveying*)

Did you think I was going to fall for any story like that? (FRED *turns away.*) I'm the one you're engaged to, and I'm the one you're going to marry.

(PAUL *comes in.*)

PAUL

Not interrupting, am I?

EILEEN (*slowly, and narrowly observing* FRED)

No, I was just going. (*With great deliberation.*) We understand each other. Don't we? (*She watches* FRED; *gets no response; goes out.*)

PAUL

What's the matter?

FRED (*dully*)

Huh?

PAUL

You haven't had a fight, have you?

FRED

(*shakes his head*)

There ain't anything the matter.

PAUL

I thought maybe we might get after one of those numbers.

FRED

I don't feel much like working.

PAUL

I'm sorry if anything's happened.

FRED

It ain't nothing. I'll be all right soon.

PAUL

The only thing is—there isn't much time left if we're going to finish before you go. Here it is Tuesday.

FRED

How about starting in early to-morrow morning?

PAUL

What are you doing this afternoon?

LOGANSPORT PUBLIC LIBRARY
LOGANSPORT, IND.

FRED

I got to go to the French passport place.

PAUL

I thought you went there yesterday.

FRED

I couldn't. I told you I went with Eileen while she was shopping.

PAUL

Oh, yah. Four hundred dollars.

FRED

She certainly knows how to spend.

PAUL (*lightly*)

You must have had a swell time, running around with two women all afternoon.

FRED

No, I wasn't. What two women?

PAUL

Her and Lucille.

FRED

Lucille wasn't along. Just I and Eileen.

PAUL

Yesterday?

FRED (*nods*)

We was together from one till five-thirty. Why?

PAUL

(*trying to fit things together*)

Nothing, only—and it was yesterday she spent the four hundred?

FRED

It was three eighty-seven.

PAUL

That's funny.

FRED

What's the matter?

PAUL (*slowly*)

I don't know. I guess I got things kind of mixed up.

FRED

What things?

PAUL

Didn't Lucille ever meet you, during the afternoon?

FRED

No. Why?

(EILEEN *and* LUCILLE *look in.*)

LUCILLE

We're going out to lunch. Want to come along?

PAUL

(*almost too casually*)

I want to talk to you.

LUCILLE

What?

PAUL

I said I want to talk to you.

LUCILLE

What about?

EILEEN

(*catching a note of something in* PAUL'S *manner*)

What's the matter with *him?*

PAUL

Where were you yesterday afternoon?

LUCILLE

(*trying to do some quick thinking*)

I was—out.

PAUL

(*quiet, but terrifying*)

I said, where were you?

LUCILLE

Do I have to report all my movements?

PAUL

You do when I catch you lying! Where were you?

(FRED *is following this with wide but uncomprehending eyes.* EILEEN *is scared but wary, waiting to go to the defense if she can.*)

LUCILLE

I had an engagement! It was—with an old friend of mine, and I thought you might not want me to do it, and so I told you I was with Eileen.

FRED

(*beginning to understand*)

Oh!

LUCILLE

I know it was foolish of me! I was going to tell you later.

EILEEN

She was going to tell you to-night! She told me so.

LUCILLE

Yah!

PAUL

Yah? (*After another terrible pause.*) Where'd you get that dress?

LUCILLE

What? I bought it.

EILEEN

I treated her to it, if you want to know.

PAUL

Is that so? That wasn't what you told me.

LUCILLE

I was afraid you wouldn't let me take it.

PAUL

(*after a bit of thinking*)

Where'd you go, yesterday afternoon? With this fellow?

LUCILLE

We went to a matinée.

PAUL

On a Monday?

LUCILLE

It was at the Palace. We went to the Palace.

PAUL

(*taking plenty of time*)

Who was there?

LUCILLE

What?

PAUL

On the bill. Who were the headliners?

LUCILLE

(*panic in her voice*)

I don't see what difference that makes.

PAUL

(*not raising his tone*)

You—dirty—lying—double-crosser!

EILEEN

That's not true!

LUCILLE

(*stopping* EILEEN)

Keep still! I'm sick of the whole thing! (*She faces Paul.*) Yes! . . . Yes, if you want to know! . . . Yes and to hell with you! Did you think I was going to wait around forever for you to give me the things I wanted? God knows I waited long enough! And then—I just didn't wait any longer, that's all. What do you know about that? Huh? What do you know about that? (PAUL *is stunned.*

Turns slowly away.) So—that's the way that stands! (*She takes a step toward the door; breaks into sobs.* EILEEN *goes to her; puts her arm around her.*)

FRED

But—but you mean to say that when you were married to *him*— (*He takes a moment, trying to realize it. Then, to* EILEEN.) But *you* must have known she was doing it!

EILEEN

What? Why—no, I didn't.

FRED

Yes. You said you bought her the dress.

PAUL

(*a scornful laugh*)

Known she was doing it! She put her up to it!

EILEEN

That's not true!

PAUL

No? Well, then I'll tell you something that is true!

EILEEN

Don't you believe him, Fred!

PAUL

And thank God I've got the courage to tell you at last!

EILEEN

He's a liar, that's what he is! I tell you he's a liar!

FRED

Why, what is it?

PAUL

You didn't know your fiancée had a lover, did you?

FRED

What?

EILEEN

I tell you it's a lie. He's just trying to separate us!

PAUL

Am I?

EILEEN

He's just making it up!

PAUL

She told you she was engaged to be married! Well, she wasn't! He was her lover, and he kicked her out, and that's why she took up with you! I'd have told you long ago, if I hadn't been a coward!

FRED

(*staggered. Turns to* EILEEN)

Is this true?

EILEEN

(*in final realization that the game is up*)

Of course it is, you little fool!

FRED

Gosh!

EILEEN

That's probably a pretty big shock to those fine up-state morals of yours.

FRED

Then I been going around all this time with a—bad woman?

EILEEN

And now have we both got permission to go, or does somebody else want to speak? (*Spotting* EDNA, *who has been brought on the scene by* MAXIE.) Maybe your little girl friend would like to say a few words?

FRED

If she does, she'll say them to me. And I'll know I can believe them, too.

EILEEN

I'm sure you'll understand each other. What's more, you're probably the only two people in the world that would. Come on, Lucille. (*She surveys the lovers.*) I want to come and visit that child of yours—next month. (LUCILLE *and* EILEEN *go.*)

(PAUL *has dropped into a chair, his head buried in his hands.*)

FRED

(*turning to where* EDNA *and* MAXIE *stand*) Eddie, I—I don't have to marry her.

EDNA

I'm so happy, Fred.

FRED

I'm sorry, Paul, about—everything.

PAUL

That's all right. I'm glad if I helped to fix things for you. I should have told you long ago. (*He goes.*)

FRED

Only look! I've still got the tickets for the boat, and it says "Frederick M. Stevens and Wife." And I wonder if the steamship people allow you to change your wife?

MAXIE

Yes. If you don't do it in midstream.

EDNA

If your wife is the right kind she won't let you take her on an expensive trip. She'll make you put everything into a home. I don't mean a big home—just a little bungalow would do.

FRED

Bungalow! A bungalow for two! That'd be a great title!

MAXIE

And I've got a great tune! (MAXIE *goes into "Button Up Your Overcoat."* FRED *is enchanted —to him it is something that* MAXIE *has composed*

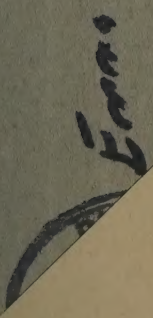
on the spur of the moment. He starts improvising words.)

FRED

"In a bungalow for two,
Where we can bill and coo——"

(*Mercifully, the curtain is down.*)

CURTAIN



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